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THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF LITERACY  
IN TWO HOMESCHOOLING FAMILIES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty College and  
Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Kevin Rua

December 2009



THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF LITERACY  
IN TWO HOMESCHOOLING FAMILIES

By

Kevin Rua

Approved November 5, 2009

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## ABSTRACT

### THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF LITERACY IN TWO HOMESCHOOLING FAMILIES

By

Kevin Rua

December 2009

Dissertation supervised by Martin Packer, Ph.D.

Homeschooling is an increasingly popular practice, and this raises questions about how it is carried out. One important area for investigation is the literacy practices of homeschooling. Literacy is often seen as a necessary component of formal schooling. This project investigated the role and function of literacy in two homeschooling families. Specifically the research was designed to answer the following questions:

- How is homeschooling both similar to and different from formal schooling?
- What are the literacy practices of homeschooling? What tools are used in these practices? What knowledge and skills are used in these practices? What are the goals of these practices?
- What are the consequences of homeschooling literacy practices?

A case study methodology was used. Participants were recruited through various homeschooling associations and data was collected using interviews, field observations of home schooling interactions, recording of these interactions, parent journals, and various artifacts. Data from each family were analyzed and presented as a case, then the two families were compared.

Regarding the first question, analysis showed that both families exhibited features of both formal and informal education. Both families utilized educational resources outside the home, such as libraries, the zoo, and museums. The families shared two characteristics that were not comparable to formal schooling: (1) each family had one adult teaching only one child and (2) the adult and child had a relationship beyond the teacher-student relationship. Regarding the second question, analysis showed that the two families utilized literacy in similar ways. For example, both used reading and writing for organizing thinking, directing behavior, abstracting, synthesizing, and categorizing. Regarding the final question, parents in both families believed that literacy promoted their child's independence, and observations and analysis of interactions suggested that homeschooling promotes attentiveness.

A sharp distinction and tension have often been described between home-based literacy practices and school-based literacy practices. This study showed that homeschooling can fall towards the middle of a continuum between formal and informal education, and as such may serve as a model for ways to incorporate home-based literacy practices within school settings.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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# Chapter 1

## Literacy and Formal Schooling

### 1.1 Introduction

In a 2004 study, the United States' Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics concluded that approximately 898,000 children were educated exclusively at home in 2003 (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). This represented a 29% increase in the number of exclusively home-educated children in the United States since 1999 (Bielick, Chandler, and Broughman, 2001). Homeschooling is now legal in all fifty states, although regulations vary from state to state. The rising popularity of homeschooling as an alternative to traditional, formal schooling has generated questions about, and an interest in, the practice of homeschooling and the effects it has on the development of the children involved in it. Therefore, the practice of homeschooling has become an increasingly important topic for educational research.

Literacy is one aspect of homeschooling that deserves study. Specifically, the role and function of literacy within homeschooling provides one area of interest for researchers. It has been argued that literacy is an important component of formal schooling (Dewey, 1916/1944; Olson, 1994). However, homeschooling is a unique phenomenon because it utilizes the supposed content of formal schooling (literacy) within a context that can be organized very differently than formal schooling. Allie-

Carson (1990) noted several structural differences between homeschooling environments and formal schooling environments: The temporal structure of homeschooling families is more relaxed and “remains in control of the family system” (1990, p. 13). Homeschooled children spend more time with their parents and their siblings, and less time with people outside the family. In addition, “the parent/teacher role and the child/student role are combined in the home setting” (1990, p. 14).

Although homeschooling uses the content of formal schooling, it uses it within a different context. Therefore, apart from the importance of homeschooling as a cultural phenomenon, the literacy practices of homeschooling open up several areas for researchers to explore. In this study I will explore the literacy practices that occur in two homeschooling families. Specifically, I will answer the following questions:

- How is homeschooling both similar to and different from formal schooling?
- What are the literacy practices of homeschooling?
  - What are the tools used in these practices?
  - What are the knowledge and skills used in these practices?
  - What are the goals of these practices?
- What are the consequences of homeschooling literacy practices?

The first question will help determine the extent that homeschooling establishes a context to study literacy apart from schooling. The second and third questions arise out of the research that is critical of the idea that literacy, in and of itself, contains certain features that bring about certain kinds of developmental changes. In studying the literacy “practices” of homeschooling, I will use Scribner and Cole’s notion of practice, which they define as “a recurrent, goal-directed sequence of activities using a particular technology and particular systems of knowledge” (1981, p. 236). My study will investigate how homeschooling differs from formal schooling, and the activities, technology, and knowledge that are integral to two homeschooling families. I will also

explore the consequences of the interactions that occur between children and parents involved in homeschooling. Very few studies have examined the role of literacy within a homeschooling setting (Gilmore, 2003; Huber, 2003; Huber, 2004; Treat, 19990). My study investigates how literacy is configured within an informal educational structure by developing a comparative case study of the literacy practices of two home schooling families.

In this chapter I will present a description of (1) formal schooling and its alleged consequences; (2) how literacy suits the development of these norms; (3) the conceptual framework of the study, which questions the essential connection between literacy and formal schooling; (4) previous research on homeschooling; and (5) the previous research on literacy within homeschooling.

In Chapter 2 I will present the previous research on homeschooling, including research on the academic achievement and socialization of homeschooled children, in addition to the research on literacy and homeschooling.

In Chapter 3 I will describe the methods of data-collection and analysis, how participants for the study were selected, and the kinds of data collected for analysis.

Chapters 4 and 5 each contain an analysis of the families studied. After the data of each family is analyzed, I will provide a cross-case level of analysis. There “the analysis can start to probe whether different groups of cases appear to share some similarity and deserve to be considered instances of the same ‘type’ of general case” (Yin, 2003, p. 135). The cross-case analysis and conclusions of the study are presented in Chapter 6. The goal of this analysis will be to investigate the similarities that emerge among the two cases to determine if there is a set of practices and consequences related to the

literacy practices that occur in the process of homeschooling. The implications of these findings will be discussed in Chapter 7.

## 1.2 Formal Schooling

The following is a description of the characteristics and assumed consequences of formal schooling. This will provide a contrast to the discussion of the characteristics and consequences of homeschooling that appear in the analysis sections. Formal schooling is understood as an institution whose exclusive function is to educate children. Formal schooling has been described as “set apart from the context of everyday life...and impersonal. ([i.e.,] teachers should not be relatives)” (Greenfield and Lave, 1982, p. 183), and occurring in “a specialized place” at a “specialized time” that is provided by “specialized personnel” separated “from the real world” (Segal, Dasen, Berry, and Poortinga, 1990, p. 126). Formal schooling emphasizes “universal values” and introduces subjects “that have no cultural counterparts whatsoever” (Scribner and Cole, 1973, p. 554). According to Holt (1972) schools are considered “special” learning places, where, “on the whole nothing else takes place.” Learning in schools “happen at special times, special hours of the day or evening, when nothing else happens; and that it should require the work of two special classes of people, the one students, the other teachers, who for the most part have no other work” (p. 118).

Literacy, considered by some a “context-free language” (Ong, 1982), would seem to fit effectively within the structure of formal schooling. By utilizing this “context free language” schools can use instructions and material that “involve information or skills in which the concrete referent is not present (e.g., geography) or in many cases no

concrete referent exists (e.g., in school arithmetic, children learn to add numbers rather than numbers of things)” (Rogoff, 1981, p. 278). In 2006 the National Education Association’s Representative Assembly placed “functional proficiency in English, with emphasis on the development of basic reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills” first on its list of items public education should prepare its citizens to do. Teaching children to read and write can be understood as an essential component of formal education.

Dreeben (1968) observed that “schools and the classrooms within them have a particular pattern of organizational properties, different from those of other agencies in which socialization takes place” (p. 1). These different organizational properties function to aid in the transition from childhood to adulthood. Therefore, according to Brim and Wheeler, schools can be described as “developmental socialization systems, where the formal purpose is the training, education, or more generally, the further socialization of individuals passing through” (cited in Kelley, 1991). This process of socialization is known as the “hidden” or “invisible” curriculum of schooling (Jackson, 1971; Shulman, 1986; Ray and Wartes, 1991).

Serpell and Hatano (1997) described the school setting as being “conducted by teachers, who are regarded as specialists and are in charge of choosing content and methods of teaching... and rely on didactic methods that require students, as ‘recipients’ of teaching, to manipulate symbols instead of handling real objects in meaningful contexts” (p. 367). Students enrolled in schools are “congregated in a class facing a single teacher; lessons are strictly scheduled into planned periods of time; authoritative texts are memorized; the performance of individual students is competitively ranked; a



highly conformist pattern of discipline is imposed” (Serpell and Hatano, 1997, p. 369). They also noted that two distinctive consequences of this setting are that it prepares students with skills that may be useful for future undertakings, but leaves the immediate, practical relevance of these skills vague; and it emphasizes “institutionally authorized competence” at the expense of practical problem solving (Serpell and Hatano, 19997, p. 367).

It is believed that the unique structure of formal schooling supports the development of several norms (Dreeben, 1968). Formal schooling teaches the distinction between a social role or social position and the person who occupies that role or position. According to Dreeben (1968) “the fact that many persons, each responsible for different subjects, all occupy the single position of teacher means that this organizational arrangement is related to the cluster of experiences in which pupils learn the distinction between persons and positions” (p. 43). In writing about the development of modern consciousness, Berger, Berger, and Kellner (1973) examined the relationship between consciousness and institutions (p. 16). They conceived of mass education as a “secondary carrier” which refers to a “variety of social and cultural processes” which develop out of the “primary carriers” of technological production and bureaucratically organized state (Berger, Berger, and Kellner, 1973, p. 103). They noted that within an institution such as schooling, “a double consciousness develops in which the other is simultaneously experienced in terms of his concrete individuality and in terms of the highly abstract complexes of action within which he functions” (Berger, Berger, & Kellner, 1973, p. 32). Children learn that many different people can occupy the same abstract role of teacher. They also learn that many different kinds of children occupy the

role of student. This aids in the development of the norm of specificity, which “refers to the scope of one person’s interest in another; to the obligation to confine one’s interest to a narrow range of characteristics and concerns, or to extend them to include a broad range” (Dreeben, 1968, p. 75). Children learn to treat a person as a concrete individual or as a member of an abstract category.

Schools also unify members of a community by subordinating differences between students to the similarities among students:

Within the classroom all pupils very close in age and in capacities related to age, occupy a single position, are given similar work assignments, confront the same teacher, and are treated very much alike in instructional and disciplinary matters. Stated differently, under these conditions much more than in the family, pupils have an opportunity to view each other and themselves as sharing common experiences. (Dreeben, 1968, p. 21)

In writing about the purpose of schools, Dewey (1916/1944) noted that:

With the development of commerce, transportation, intercommunication, and emigration, countries like the United States are composed of a combination of different groups with different traditional customs. It is this situation which has, perhaps more than any other one cause, forced the demand for an educational institution which shall provide something like a homogeneous and balanced environment for the young...The intermingling in the school of youth of different races, different religions, and unlike customs creates for all a new and broader environment. Common subject matter accustoms all to a unity of outlook upon a broader horizon than is visible to the members of any group while it is isolated. (p. 22)

By bringing together different kinds of children and treating them similarly, as members of the category ‘students’ schools emphasize what is common among the members of that category. This aids in the development of the norm of universalism. Neil Postman (1996) defined the “essential task of public schools” as finding and promoting “large, inclusive narratives for all students to believe in” (p. 144).

Within institutions that emphasize universal characteristics of its members “there is a general expectation of justice. It is expected that everyone in the relevant category will receive equal treatment” (Berger, Berger, & Kellner, 1973, p. 51). Once children are taught they are similar in some respect, the expectation of similar treatment follows. In the process of teaching universal characteristics among a vast group of families and individuals, schools also implicitly teach categorization. As students are grouped into age-segregated classrooms, confront similar tasks, and are promoted to a higher grade, they attain the knowledge that “each age-grade category is associated with a particular set of circumstances...In these three ways, the grade, with its age-homogeneous membership and clearly demarcated boundaries, provides a basis for categorical grouping that the family cannot readily duplicate” (Dreeben, 1968, p. 76).

By removing children from the home environment, where they have developed a relationship of dependency with their parents, schools also aid in the development of autonomy and independence. Due to the larger number of children in a given classroom, a student’s likelihood of establishing a meaningful relationship with an adult (the teacher) decreases (Dreeben, 1968). With the use of tests, which are taken individually, and the prohibition against cheating students are taught to be self-reliant and work separately and independently from the other students in the classroom (Dreeben, 1968; Koff & Warren, 1971).

In addition to the above, the structure of formal schooling creates a situation in which particular kinds of interactions occur, and these interactions also have consequences for the students. In examining the interactional sequences that occur between teachers and students in a classroom, Mehan (1979) found that sequences occur in “three-part

instructional sequences” which consist of a teacher initiated request, a student reply, and a teacher evaluation (p. 52). When the student reply is not in line with the initial teacher’s request, extended sequences occur in which the initiator “works until symmetry is established” (Mehan, 1979, p. 62). When symmetry is established, the teacher ends the extended sequence with an evaluation in the same way the teacher would end the three-part sequence. Therefore, the “structures that tie interactional sequences together are wide-ranging” and form the “basic organizational structure of classroom lessons” (Mehan, 1979, p. 76). These sequences organize classroom lessons in several ways. Teacher initiations manage student responses by specifying when students can respond and by identifying the next speaker in one of three ways: (1) naming a specific student, (2) picking a student who has raised his or her hand, or (3) allowing any student to respond without being called on (Mehan, 1979, p. 95). The teachers’ evaluations sanction inappropriate responses and allow the teacher to take back the classroom floor after a student response (Mehan, 1979, p. 102). This feature of classroom conversation differs from what occurs in everyday conversation (Mehan, 1979, p. 140).

In summary, formal schooling is a special kind of cultural setting that organizes the relationship between adults and children in a particular way so as to produce certain kinds of developmental changes in children. Specifically, institutional schooling teaches them the separation of role and person, universalism, fairness, categorization, and autonomy. Just as cultures and cultural practices present to children skills that enable them to inhabit that culture, schooling presents skills to children that enable them to inhabit the culture of schooling. My analysis will include a comparison of the

structure and the interactions of the homeschooling families with these characteristics of formal schooling.

### 1.3 Literacy and Formal Schooling

The skill most often associated with schooling is literacy (Olson, 1994). John Dewey (1916/1944) connected the existence of formal education and the task of teaching children to be literate:

Roughly speaking, they [schools] come into existence when social traditions are so complex that a considerable part of the social store is committed to writing and transmitted through written symbols ... Written form tends to select and record matters which are comparatively foreign to everyday life. Consequently as soon as a community depends to any considerable extent upon what lies beyond its own territory and its own immediate generation, it must rely upon the set agency of schools to insure adequate transmissions of all its resources. (p. 19)

Kline (1998) described the “institutional space” of schools as establishing a “new agenda” in which “literacy and knowledge became the privileged objectives of socialization” (p. 98). And Olson (1994) believed that the practice of literacy cannot be separated from schooling. Schools, as social institutions, and literacy, as a skill of that institution, arise when cultural practices and traditions require that particular institution and skill. Since literacy can be considered a means by which children learn to partake in a particular culture, it can also accurately be described as an instrument by which children are socialized. Others have noted that, as schools are specialized places that are separated from many of the concrete things that children learn about, written language functions within schools by providing symbols for those things (Greenfield & Bruner, 1969; Rogoff, 1981; Segall, Dasen, Berry, and Poortinga 1990). Just as the organization of schooling creates a certain way of existing in the world, it is believed,

that literacy supported that existence. For example, it is believed that literacy makes aspects of speech and language objects of thought (Olson, 2002). “Writing systems create the categories in terms of which we become conscious of speech...Writing is, in principle, metalinguistics” (Olson, 1994. p. 89). Children learning to read must analyze words into syllables and synthesize syllables into words. Several studies have demonstrated that alphabetic literacy is a necessary condition for analyzing the elements of speech (Morais, Bertleson, Cary, and Alegria, 1987; Read, Yun-Fei, Hong-Yin, and Bao-Quing, 1987).

Literacy is a skill that may help one to distinguish words from their referents. Piaget (1929) questioned children about their understanding of names and concluded that children under the age of six are “nominal realists” in that they believed that the name of an object is essentially related to that object. The following exchanges took place between Piaget (1929) and two young children:

*And could the moon have been called ‘sun’ ? –no. Why not? –Because the sun makes it warm and the moon give light (p. 81).*

*Well, couldn’t the sun have been called ‘moon’? –No. Why not? –Because the sun can’t change, it can’t become smaller (p. 81).*

In this exchange the children questioned had no clear distinction between the word and what the word refers to. However, upon learning to read, which requires analyzing words into letters, the word “moon” becomes a collection of the letters m-o-o-n. The child can realize that those letters can be reorganized and used in other words that have nothing to do with the actual moon. The intrinsic connection between the word moon and the actual moon is lost when the word ‘moon’ is understood as a collection of letters. This is aided by the metalinguistic character of writing, which was explained above.

Just as literacy aids in making speech an object of thought, so it can be understood as making thinking an object of thought. According to Piaget (1929), “the problem of names probes to the very heart of the problem of thought, for, to the child, to think means to speak” (p. 61). If literacy allows speech to become an object of reflection, and, for children to think is to speak, then learning to read and write helps make thought an object of reflection for children. As a corollary, if to think is to speak, and speech is something that is separate from what is spoken about, then thinking can be understood as something distinct from what is thought about.

This meta-cognition makes the logical analysis of statements possible (Egan, 1997). The separation between thought and its referent is the basis for deductive logic (Goody & Watt, 1968). By separating names, and therefore thought, from things, one can manipulate names and terms, and therefore thought, with little regard for what those terms stand for. According to Hurley, (1994) “every argument makes two basic claims: a claim that evidence exists and a claim that the alleged evidence supports something. The first is a factual claim, the second an inferential claim” (p. 41). In utilizing logic, one examines the inference, i.e. the logical relationship between the terms, without taking into consideration whether or not those terms are describing things or conditions that actually exist. For a deductive argument to be valid, i.e., have a valid inference, it is not necessary that the premises or the conclusion are true (Copi, 1968; Hurley, 1994). What matters is the inference, not the reference. Literacy helps the development of logical thinking.

In separating thought from what is thought about, literacy also aids in separating the thinker from what is thought about (Ong, 1982) and promotes abstract thinking

(Greenfield, 1972). According to Greenfield and Bruner (1969) children not introduced to reading and writing are unable to distinguish between their own psychological reactions and the events to which they are reacting. However:

When names, or symbols in general, no longer inhere in their referents, they must go somewhere; and the logical place is the psyche of the language user. Thus, the separation of words and things demand a notion that words are in people's head, not in their referents...Meaning is seen to vary with the particular speaker, and the notion of psychological relativity is born. Implicit in this notion is the distinctness of oneself and one's point of view. Thus, the individual must conceptually separate himself from the group; he must become self conscious, aware of having a particular slant on things. (p. 653)

This separation creates the notion of an individual that stands apart from the world.

Therefore, literacy helps create an autonomous self and an autonomous reality.

Postman (1994) argued the printing press created a new symbolic world, which, more than any other invention, changed the prevailing conception of adulthood.

Specifically, Postman argued that reading and writing aided in the development of self-consciousness:

Prior to printing, all human communication occurred in a social context...But with the printed book another tradition began: the isolated reader and his private eye...Thus, at both ends of the process- production and consumption- print created a psychological environment within which claims of individuality became irresistible. (1994, p. 27)

Postman (1994) believed that proliferation of written texts, brought on by the printing press, "created a new way of organizing thought" (p. 31). This reorganization emphasized, among other things, logical thinking. The activities of reading and writing and their subsequent reorganization of thinking created a new conception of adults as something qualitatively distinct from children:

What had happened, simply, was the Literate Man had been created...And in his coming, he left behind the children. For in the medieval world neither the young nor the old could read...That is why there had been no need for the idea of



childhood, for everyone shared the same information environment and therefore lived in the same social and intellectual world. (Postman, 1994, p. 36)

Therefore, because children were no longer able to inhabit the intellectual or the social world of the adult, they retreated, or were placed, into their own world (van den Berg, 1961). “They [children] were separated because it became essential in their culture that they learn how to read and write and how to be the sort of people a print culture required” (Postman, 1994, p. 37-38). A link between literacy and schools can be seen here. Due to the growth of reading and writing, schools became a new place for children, and only children, to inhabit.

Freebody and Baker (1985) explored the ways in which school texts play a role in socializing children into the norms of school. They examined the frequent appearance of certain words, the size of the words, the characters that populate the texts, and the structure of the conversations among these characters. For example, when the texts were compared to a random sample of the daily conversations of five-and-a-half-year-old children, they were intrigued by the frequent use of the word ‘little’ in the texts. Noting that ‘little’, when compared to ‘small’, carries an additional meaning that is used to express endearment and depreciation, they concluded that “the prevalence of little informs young children of the tremendous importance not only of size but also of certain behaviors and qualities which may, among other things, suit the purposes of schooling” (Freebody and Baker, 1985, p. 386). The conversations represented in the texts demonstrated “an image of a polite and orderly turn-taking system among speakers” which is conducive to the structure of schools (Freebody and Baker, 1985, p. 396). They concluded that these texts present to children a model of childhood-within-school.

Literacy also has wider, philosophical implications. According to Egan (1997), literacy may engender what he calls “Philosophic Understanding” which refers to the use of “systematic theoretic thinking and an insistent belief that Truth can only be expressed in these terms” (pp. 104-105). This type of understanding embraces a disembodied, abstract rationality, which aligns itself with cognition and distances itself from the affective. Other elements of this type of understanding include (1) the undermining of tradition and the encouragement of rational thinking and (2) grasping the rules that underlie human history and action (Egan, 1997, p. 121).

Scribner and Cole (1981) noted that a widespread belief about schooling is that it presents to students subject matter that is “outside of its normal context of occurrence in a symbolic medium” and “provides the student with practice in abstract, decontextualized thinking” (p. 13). Denny (1983) believed that, although “literacy is deeply embedded in the social processes of family life and is not some specific list of activities added to the family agenda to explicitly teach reading and writing” (p. 93). In schools literacy is “lifted out of context” and becomes “the focus of specific, culturally remote pedagogical attention. Literacy becomes an end in itself, reduced to a hierarchy of interrelated skills” (Denny, 1983, p. 90).

As mentioned above, literacy aids in the development of logical thinking. In a cross-cultural study of the Maya and Mestizo peoples living in the Yucatan peninsula Cole (1996) found that “for cognitive tasks involving deliberate remembering, the use of taxonomic categories to organize categorizing and remembering, and formal reasoning on logical syllogisms, performance improved as children grew older only to the extent that they entered and continued in school” (p. 83). When presented with syllogisms,

rather than give the logically necessary answer, the Maya and Mestizo people's answers were based on knowledge of the concrete circumstances of the particular people described in the statements. These responses were described as empirical, which means they are based on everyday information. Empirical responses can be contrasted with theoretical responses, which are based on the content of the propositions. "Theoretical answers increased exclusively as a function of schooling ... Children and adults who had not attended school usually gave responses based on the empirical plausibility of the question posed" (p. 84). Therefore, schooling, as well as literacy, is believed to aid in the development of logical thinking.

Therefore, it is assumed that literacy produces consequences that are similar to the kinds of consequences that the structure of formal schooling produces. For example, just as it is believed that schooling unifies a community by finding common, abstract characteristics among a diverse student population, it is also believed that literacy aids in the development of abstract thinking, which is the very basis of categorization (Rand, 1967). Also, just as schools promote independence and autonomy, literacy "separates the knower from the known and thus sets up conditions for 'objectivity', in the sense of personal disengagement or distancing" (Ong, 1982, p. 46). Literacy also aids in the development of independence by creating the "isolated reader" (Postman, 1994, p. 27) and the conditions for the development of the "psychological relativity" (Greenfield and Bruner, 1969, p. 653). As mentioned above, Cole (1996) found that "for cognitive tasks involving deliberate remembering, the use of taxonomic categories to organize categorizing and remembering, and formal reasoning on logical syllogisms, performance improved as children grew older only to the extent that they entered and

continued in school” (p. 83). Similarly in aiding the development of meta-cognitive tasks, literacy helps create a separation between thought and its referent is the basis for deductive logic (Goody & Watt, 1968). These similarities are relevant for this study because homeschooling is an educational setting that utilizes literacy outside of the context with which it is typically associated. Therefore, it and provides an opportunity to study literacy and its possible consequences apart from formal schooling.

#### 1.4 Literacy as a Cultural Practice

The view that there is a necessary connection between literacy and formal schooling (Dewey 1916/1944) has been challenged by several theoretical perspectives which provide the conceptual framework for this study. According to the socio-cultural perspective “humans are embedded in a socio-cultural matrix and human behavior cannot be understood independently of this ever-present matrix” (Miller, 2002, p. 368). How children develop and what they develop into depends on the socio-culture context in which they develop. Vygotsky (1978) believed that the natural development of children is mediated by psychological tools (such as words, letters, numbers, maps, etc.) that are provided within a particular socio-cultural context and these tools are used to help the child navigate that context. The child first encounters these tools in its interactions with adult members of the culture and subsequently internalizes those interactions. According to Vygotsky (1978) “every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first on the social level, and later on the individual level; first, *between people (inter-psychologically)*, and then *inside the child*

(*intrapsychologically*)” (p. 57). The child’s use of language allows the child to control their actions (p. 35):

The speaking child has the ability to direct his attention in a dynamic way. He can view changes in his immediate situation from the point of view of past activities, and he can act in the present from the viewpoint of the future...Created with the help of speech, the time field for action extends both forward and backward...The emerging psychological system in the child now encompasses two new functions: intentions and symbolic representations of purposeful action. (pp. 36-37)

The socio-cultural approach studies children and adults, as well as the cultural context that provides the tools for and orders the relationships between them, as an integrated whole. Learning, including learning to read, is not an activity separate from the context in which it occurs (Gatto, 1992; Rogoff & Chavajay, 1995). Therefore, a socio-cultural perspective would regard literacy, not as merely the acquisition of a skill, but as a tool to be used in participating in a community whose more experienced members participate in reading and writing activities. The socio-cultural framework interprets reading and writing as ways in which children participate in their culture and would study how literacy mediates the relationship between children and others within that cultural context.

In an attempt to unravel the supposed effects of literacy from schooling Scribner and Cole (1981) studied the Vai people in Liberia, who use a script that is not taught in a formal school setting. In this context literacy and schooling are separate, and their effects could be studied independently of one another. “In its simplest form, our strategy was to determine if the kinds of changes associated with school education would be observed as a consequence of experience with either of the two literacies that flourished outside Western schools” (Scribner and Cole, 1981, p. 113). They noted that on abstraction-categorization tasks, which entailed the categorization of geometric

shapes by form, color, and numbers, Vai literacy, minus schooling “enhanced the tendency to sort the cards according to form or number, an outcome consistent with the notion that literacy focuses attention on these aspects of graphic symbols” (Scribner and Cole, 1981, p. 121). However, literacy without schooling did not significantly affect memory, free recall tasks, logical thinking, or language objectivity. “Neither the Vai script nor Qur’anic-learning-and-Arabic script...produce the range of cognitive effect that schooling does” (Scribner and Cole, 1981, p. 132). The ability to solve logic problems, such as syllogisms, was the skill that was strongly associated with schooling. “Not only did amount of school increase the number of correct answers, but it contributed to the choice of theoretical explanations, over and above correct answers” (Scribner and Cole, 1981, p. 127). They concluded that:

One of our goals in studying Vai script literacy was to gain evidence for or against the proposition that literacy is the crucial learning that goes on in school from the point of view of cognitive consequences. Since the non-schooled literacies do not yield the same pattern of performance on experimental tasks as schooling, we might be inclined to conclude that literacy is an unimportant factor in producing school effects. We need some caution here, since nonschooled and schooled literacies among the Vai involved different languages and writing systems, but insofar as single piece of research allows conclusions about this tangled set of questions, our studies indicate that school effects are not brought about through the ability to read and write, per se. (p. 255)

From this study Scribner and Cole (1981) developed the notion of a practice as a “goal-directed sequence of activities using a particular technology and particular systems of knowledge” (p. 236). Utilizing the notion of practice, they developed a socio-cultural view of the practice of literacy:

We approach literacy as a set of socially organized practices which make use of a symbol system and a technology for producing and disseminating it. Literacy is not simply knowing how to read and write a particular script but applying this knowledge for specific purposes in specific contexts of use. The nature of

these practices, including, of course, their technological aspects, will determine the kinds of skills associated with literacy. (p. 236)

Therefore, literacy is not merely a cognitive skill, but a tool intimately connected to the practice in which it is used.

Street (1995) has also questioned the “autonomous” view of literacy, which portrays literacy as a context-free language that, in and of itself, instills in literates technical skills that enable them to perform cognitive tasks such as abstract and logical thinking. Noting that ethnographic research has found oral-like characteristics in writing and writing-like characteristics in speech, Street emphasized the importance of the social context that give both oral and literacy practices meaning. The field of New Literacy Studies (NLS) utilizes an “ideological model” of literacy which “stresses the significance of the socialization process in the construction of the meaning of literacy for participants, and is therefore concerned with the general social institutions through which this process takes place and not just the specific ‘educational’ ones” (Street, 1995, p. 29).

Street (1995) studied the tension that occurred in Iran in the 1960’s and 1970’s when educational reforms were introduced to “increase ‘participation’ in the life and activities of the modern state through mass literacy” (1995, p. 61). The educational reforms were introduced via a centralized, state-controlled system of education. Street notes that this was not an example of literacy being introduced to illiterates:

There was already a long tradition of forms of education and literacy in rural Iran...The villagers were already accustomed to the educational traditions imparted through the *maktabs* [Qur’anic schools], and in many cases these were supplemented by local ‘reading groups’, in which people gathered at each others’ homes to read *surahs* of the Qur’an and passages from the commentaries...In this sense, then, *maktab* students cannot be deemed ‘illiterate’, although they may well appear so in government and formal school tests designed to examine other,

less ‘hidden’ skills. What students of the *maktab* acquired as part of their *maktab* literacy was not an obvious, or even universal, aspect of literacy skills: it was a specific skill derived from the specific nature of the literacy materials they used, and of the context of learning in which they encountered them. (p. 41)

Street notes that *maktab* literacy enabled villagers to develop a “commercial literacy” which, among other things, allowed them to create business enterprises that included tasks such as “signing checks, writing out bills, labeling boxes, listing customers and their deals in exercise books, recording fruit held” (p. 42). Street also found that youths educated in the literacy practices of the government schools had a difficult time finding jobs, while *maktab* students were better prepared for work within the village (p. 40). This example highlighted the tension that can exist between different types of literacy practices, as opposed to the tension that may exist between literate and oral practices.

Barton and Hamilton (1998) also interpreted literacy as a social practice, noting that “literacy is primarily something people do” (p. 3). They developed six propositions concerning the nature of literacy as a practice:

Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts.  
There are different literacies associated with different domains of life.  
Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies become more dominant, visible and influential to others.  
Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices.  
Literacy is historically situated.  
Literacy practices change, and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making. (p.7)

They used this framework to interpret how four people from a working-class community in Lancaster, England in the 1990’s used literacy and identified six areas where it is essential to daily life: Organizing life, personal communication, private leisure, documenting life, sense making, and social participation. (p. 247-250). They



developed the concept of “vernacular literacies” which are “rooted in everyday experience and serve everyday purposes...often they are less valued by society and are not particularly supported, nor regulated by external social institutions” (1998, p. 251-252). These literacies are learned informally and are typically not separated from use:

Learning and use are integrated in everyday activities and where literacy remains an implicit part of the activity...this can be contrasted with many school practices, where learning is separated from use, divided up into subject areas, disciplines, and specialisms, and where knowledge is often made explicit, is reflected upon, and is open to evaluation. (p. 252)

Although the distinctiveness of home literacy practices can be contrasted with what occurred in school, Barton and Hamilton acknowledge that what is more prominent is the way in which formal literacies, including school literacies, “are brought home where they mingle together” (p. 188).

### 1.5 Literacy, In and Out of Formal Schooling

Other studies have examined how literacy practices, occurring outside the setting of formal schooling, contrast with the literacy practices that occurred within formal schooling. In analyzing the data on the literacy practices of six families Taylor (1983) noted that, within the family “the direct transmission of literacy styles and values through specific learning encounters occurs less frequently, and such didactic occasions are spasmodic, usually occurring in response to some school-related situation” (p. 7). She described several of the literacy activities that the families whom she studied engaged in:

Writing letters to family and friends, reading signs, demonstrating ownership, and filling out forms were all functional literate activities for the children participating in the study. From a very young age, print formed one medium for mediating experience. Before the children could read and write in the traditional

sense, they were writing letters...Navigating by reading signs began in the back pack: “Pizza,” “Exit,” and “Two Guys” were quickly learned as visual symbols of purposeful activities. Designating ownership began with the children’s names, often written on pictures they drew...Thus, the children are growing in familial contexts; the parents’ literate habits infuse their children’s lives with literate activities. (Taylor, 1983, p. 86)

She concluded that for the six families participating in her study “literacy is part of the very fabric of family life” and “gave the children both status and identity as it became the medium of shared social experience; it facilitated the temporal integration of their social histories as the highly valued artifact of family life became the prized commodity of the schools” (p. 87). Taylor noted that children who come from families in which literacy was not valued are disconnected from the educational system which did prize literacy.

Knobel (1999) used an ethnographic, multiple case study design to study the literacy practices of four adolescents completing their final year of primary school in Brisbane, Australia. Her analysis included an examination of the relationship between literacy practices that occur outside of school with literacy practices that are school related. She concluded that the adolescents were involved in various creative uses of literacy outside their classroom. For example, in the case of a thirteen-year-old adolescent boy named Jacques, out of school literacy practices included:

being a member of the Jehovah’s Witnesses [which] involves Jacques in a wide range of reading, writing, speaking, and listening practices. Although Jacques sometimes engages in these practices reluctantly, the amount of public and private reading, public speaking, and discussion he does in connection with being a Jehovah’s Witness far outstrips his application to literacy activities at school. (pp. 120-121)

Also, Hannah, a twelve-year-old adolescent girl “usually spent her lunch hours devising elaborate and humorous skits and dance routines with the help of her three friends”

(Knobel, 1999, p. 167). Knobel noted that for the students, however, these practices may have little in common with the practices that occur within school. She “repeatedly observed sharp differences between each participant’s exuberant, intertextual, and often witty language use outside formal classroom spaces and his or her (official) in-class language and literacy production, which was often minimal and usually bordered on the pedestrian” (Knobel, 1999, p. 202). These sharp differences “serve to alienate school-based language and literacy learning from everyday social and language practices” (Knobel, 1999, p. 203).

Skilton-Sylvester (2002) provided a three-year-long ethnographic study of a Cambodian girl in Philadelphia in which “it became quite clear that there was a big separation between school literacy and home literacy... Much of the work students were asked to do was quite disconnected from their interests and lived experiences” (p.61-62). For example:

When I compared Nan’s in-school and out-of-school literacy practices, one of the first things I noticed was how her oral, visual, and creative focus was often at odds with what mattered most in the school writing she encountered...to her, writing was meant to be read orally for an audience. (Skilton-Sylvester, 2002, p. 67)

Unlike much of Nan’s school writing, for which the teacher was the only audience and the purpose of writing was often ‘to finish the assignment for a grade,’ Nan’s out-of-school writing had multiple audiences and served multiple functions. (Skilton-Sylvester, 2002, p. 82)

Skilton-Sylvester concluded that “my study has shown ... that if students’ lives only enter the school walls through writing that is on the periphery of how students are ultimately evaluated, we have not created the bridge needed to make out-of-school strengths of a student such as Nan visible when she is tackling academic literacy” (p. 85).

Literacy research has also examined how the identities of the participants change as they engage in literacy activities. Gee (1996) distinguished between Discourse and discourse. Discourse (big-D) is defined as “a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and artifacts, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of socially meaningful group or ‘social network’”(p. 131). It is in inhabiting a Discourse we “make clear to ourselves and others who we are and what we are doing at a given time and place” (p. 131). Discourse, including reading and writing, is used to establish someone’s place within a group and enable participation, in a certain way, within the group. As one’s discourse changes, or as how one uses discourse changes, so to does their position within the group. Therefore, their role, i.e., their identity within the group, also changes. One’s identity changes as one becomes familiar with the tools of a particular context. According to Gee (2001) changes in participation entail changes in identities that are created, situated, and maintained in a social context (p. 37). Changes in participation come about through the mastery of the relevant tools and artifacts of the situation in which one is participating.

These studies provide a sharp contrast to the understanding of literacy as a decontextualized form of communication. Gee (2000) noted that because “all language is meaningful only in and through the contexts in which it is used” no language, including the use of written language in schools, should be considered “decontextualized” (p. 63). Rather than literacy per se being a disconnected form of communication it is more accurate to maintain that school literacy is a type of literacy that can be disconnected from other forms of literacy in a student’s life. School

literacies serve one function and non-school literacies serve another. These studies demonstrate that out-of-school literacy practices can be viewed, judged, and ultimately devalued when they are seen through the lens of school-based literacy practices; upon entrance school becomes the dominant institution in a child's life. A study of the literacy practices of homeschooling may be informative in that the literacy practices within homeschooling are explicitly, if informally, educational.

Harman (1987) observed that "at its simplest, literacy refers to reading and writing abilities" but that "the terms reading and writing, which form the core of literacy, in fact establish very little. They do not, for instance, convey any notion of the content or uses of what is read and written" (p. 3). Rather, literacy is "a combination of technical skills that make it possible, with content and purpose, to interact with the specific environment in which people live and function" (Harman, 1987, p. 96). For this research literacy will be understood as the skill of reading and writing and I will investigate the content and purpose reading and writing have within the context of two homeschooling families.

One way of understanding the social function of reading and writing, one that conveys an idea of purpose, is through the concept of genres. Rather than understanding literary genres as discrete categories that organize texts according to a fixed or essential elements, Chapman (1999) argued that they should "be viewed as social actions situated in particular types of contexts within a discourse community" (p. 471). While it is the case that writing and texts can be organized into certain categories, this does not exhaust the ways in which reading writing can be understood. Literary genres can be "about template, but not template alone" (Fleischer & Andrew-Vaughan, 2009, p. 8). In

addition to studying templates and forms of text, genre studies are informed “by the context, the intended audience, and the positioning of author” (Fleischer & Andrew-Vaughn, 2009, p. 8). Therefore knowledge of genres (i.e., of the context, the intended audience, position of the author, etc.) helps connect reading and writing (Dean, 2008, p. 5). “Genre studies almost always tie together the study of literature and that of writing, so that students can continually connect their reading to the creation of text, learning to read like writers and write with readers in mind” (Fleischer & Andrew-Vaughn, 2009, p. 2). Bakhtin (cited in Chapman, 1999) distinguished between primary and secondary genres. “Primary genres are context-embedded, localized, and intrinsically tied to time and place. Secondary genres, on the other hand, are removed from the contexts of activities in which primary genres are embedded” (p. 471). The kind of genres used by the homeschooling families will be presented.

# Chapter 2

## Homeschooling

### 2.1 Homeschooling

Lines (1991) defined homeschooling as “instruction and learning, at least some of which is through planned activity, taking place primarily at home in a family setting with a parent acting as teacher or supervisor of the activity, and with one or more pupils who are members of the same family and who are doing grade K-12 work” (p. 10).

There are several different ways of homeschooling children. A satellite homeschool is a form of homeschooling that “functions like a tiny one-room schoolhouse” whereby a parent pays tuition and “the school send the books, tests, lesson plans, and workbooks” to the parent and this material is used by the parent when teaching the child (Kaufeld, 2002, p. 109). Schooling that occurs in the home where the child uses a curriculum taught via the internet is known as cyber-schooling. Some parents use a specific curriculum, but have no connection or affiliation with a school. John Holt coined the term “unschooling” which refers to a curriculum-free style of education. Holt was one of the earliest supporters of homeschooling. In numerous books and articles he argued that the structure of conventional schooling deadens the natural propensity children have for learning. According to Holt “children are by nature smart, energetic, curious, eager to learn, and good at learning; that they do not need to be bribed and bullied to

learn; that they learn best when they are happy, active, involved, and interested in what they are doing” (1972, p. 2). However, he believed that within the structure of compulsory schooling this natural curiosity deteriorates. Rewards, such as grade advancement and diplomas, become confused with education and competence, respectively (Illich, 1971).

Rather than reform schools, Holt questioned whether or not they should exist. This suggestion was typically met with skepticism because a society that uses schools as the primary institution to educate its children comes to believe that “learning best takes place in an institution that doesn’t produce anything but learning” (Holt, 1972, p. 200). As a consequence of this belief this is a society “in which most of the tools and resources are locked up in schools. It is a society in which it has been made very difficult to learn or do many things outside of school, and almost impossible to get official credit or recognition for having learned or done them” (Holt, 1972, p. 188). Holt was in favor of “deschooling” society, which means creating a society “in which there were many paths to learning and advancement, instead of one school path as we have now” (Holt, 1972, p. 190). For Holt, one such path could be made at home. He concluded that being educated at home was a more valuable experience, not because the home “is a better school than the schools, but that it isn’t school at all. It is not an artificial place, set up to make ‘learning’ happen and in which nothing except ‘learning’ happens. It is a natural, organic, central, fundamental human institution” (1981, p. 346).

Other pioneers in the field of homeschooling include Raymond and Dorothy Moore. In the book *School Can Wait* Moore, Willey, Moore, and Kordenbrock (1979) analyzed several hundred studies dealing with child development issues such as aggression,



attachment, cognition, delinquency, dependency, logical thinking, neurology, perception, personality development, and socialization. They believed that “in spite of current trends toward ever-earlier schooling or out-of-family care, strong research-based data suggest that whenever possible parents should be their children’s only regular ‘teachers’ or care givers until the youngsters are at least eight or ten years old” (Moore, Willey, Moore, and Kordenbrock, 1979, p. 2). Due to their developmental immaturity, children should be kept out of institutionalized settings until they reach an Integrated Maturity Level. The Integrated Maturity Level is “the point at which the developmental variables (affective, psychomotor, perceptual, and cognitive) within the child reach an optimum peak of readiness in maturation and cooperative functioning for out-of-home group learning (typical school) experience” (Moore & Moore, 1975, p. 34). The Moores believed that a child’s enrollment in an institutional setting such as school, before reaching the integrated maturity level (typically between the ages of 8 and 10), is harmful (Moore & Moore, 1975). The Moores challenged the conventional wisdom that the organizational structure of contemporary schooling is the best possible learning environment (Moore and Moore, 1981). Rather they believed that given the propensity for children of all ages to learn, the way in which the home is filled with materials and resources that can engage children in learning, and the presence of a caring adult(s) who are intimately knowledgeable about the child’s life home and family life provide a far superior learning and social environment than any school (Moore & Moore, 1981).

Stevens (2001) described homeschooling as “one of the most formidable educational causes of its time” (p. 11). Beato (2005) noted that homeschooling is more popular than other educational reforms such as charter schools and school vouchers. There are

various reasons why parents decide to homeschool. Van Galen (1991) interviewed 23 parents from 16 different families and divided them into two general categories: Ideologues and Pedagogues. Ideologues homeschool for two reasons: “They object to what they believe is being taught in public and private schools and they seek to strengthen their relationships with their children” (Van Galen, 1991, p. 67). The pedagogues, however, do not so much object to what is taught in schools, as they believe that the teaching done in schools is incompetent (Van Galen, 1991, p. 71). A 1999 survey conducted by the US Department of Education reported the following reasons parents have for homeschooling their children (parents could choose more than one answer):

- 48.9% believe they can give their child a better education,
- 38.4% for religious reasons,
- 25.6% due to a poor learning environment at school,
- 16.8% for family reasons,
- 15.1% to develop moral character,
- 12.1% object to what the school teaches,
- 11.6% believe the school does not challenge the child,
- 11.5% due to other problems with available schools,
- 9% due to student behavior problems, and
- 8.2% because the child has special needs. (U.S. Department of Education, 2001)

The 2003 survey by the US Department of Education (2004) reported that parents homeschool their children out of concern about the school environment (31%), to provide religious or moral instruction (30%), and because of dissatisfaction with academic instruction at school (16%). In an analysis of 195 families Montes (2006) found that providing a better education (47%) and religious reasons (41%) are the two main reasons why parents homeschool their children. Montes also found that homeschooled students at or below the third grade level were twice as likely to be homeschooled because of parent objections to what is taught in school, and were three

times more likely to be homeschooled in order to develop character when compared to homeschooled children at or above the fourth grade level (Montes, 2006, p. 16).

Along with homeschooling's growing popularity have come questions regarding its impact on the development of children. This research typically falls into two general areas: Studies that examine the academic achievement of homeschooled children and those that examine the socialization of homeschooled children. Academic achievement is usually studied by comparing the results of standardized achievement tests of home-educated children with the achievement test results of conventionally-schooled children. In a nationwide study Ray (1997) examined the academic achievement of 1,952 homeschooled children. The population of children had taken a wide variety of tests: 37.3 % took the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, 29.8 % took the Stanford Achievement Test, 15.6% took the California Achievement Test, 6.7% took the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, 2.7% took the Metropolitan Achievement Test, .2% took the Tests of Achievement and Proficiency, and 7.9 % took other types of achievement tests. "The students scored on the average, at the following percentiles on standardized academic achievement tests: (a) total reading, 87<sup>th</sup>, (b) total language, 80<sup>th</sup>, (c) total math, 82<sup>nd</sup>, (d) total listening, 85<sup>th</sup>, (e) science, 84<sup>th</sup>, (f) social studies, 85<sup>th</sup>, (g) study skills, 81<sup>st</sup>, (h) basic battery (typically, reading, language, and mathematics), 85<sup>th</sup>, and (i) complete battery (all subject areas in which student was tested), 87<sup>th</sup>" (Ray, 1997, p. 79). Using a regression analysis Ray also examined the relationship between academic achievement and twelve other variables. The five independent variables that explained statistically significant amounts of variance in students' test scores "were father's education level,

mother's education level, years taught at home, gender of the student, and number of visits to the public library" (1997, p. 59).

The intellectual growth of home schooled children from a Piagetian perspective was examined by Quine and Marek (1988). They defined intellectual growth as "the development of cognition from preoperational thought through concrete and formal operational thought" and studied how intellectual development was affected by non-conventional schooling in children between the ages of six and thirteen years (Quine and Marek, 1988, p. 1). They compared two different groups of children: One group consisted of nineteen students enrolled in the Pathway School. This school met two days per week, for two-and-a-half hours per day, and instructed the children in math and science. The Pathway School utilized a teaching procedure based on Piaget's model of intellectual development. They described the teaching procedures in the following way:

The student first explores the concept to be learned using materials and basic directions provided by the instructor. That learning-cycle phase is called exploration. Next, the students, under the guidance of the instructor, combine their ideas, data and observations which the exploration produced and identify the concept which is inherent in the data. That learning-cycle phase is referred to as conceptual invention. During the conceptual invention phase the language of the concept is introduced. The students next use the newly invented concept in several different ways. They might engage in additional activities, work problems, answer questions, pursue individual investigations and/or read about the use and further descriptions of the concept. This phase leads the students to expand the concept- or idea they have just met and is called the expansion of the idea. (Quine and Marek, 1988, p. 1)

The parents of the children in this group were responsible for all other instruction. The other group consisted of nine students educated exclusively at home by their parents.

"No attempt was made to regulate or specify how the learning environment was to be structured" for the children who were educated exclusively at home (Quine and Marek, 1988, p. 3). Clinical interviews, designed to assess the conservation reasoning, ability

to do ratios, and combinational logic of these children, were conducted at the beginning of the study and again nine months later. “A composite score for each child’s pretest determined his/her intellectual developmental level as either concrete operational, transitional, or formal operational. Because of the small sample sizes in this study some of the findings were collapsed into two categories: concrete and post-concrete (traditional and formal)” (Quine and Marek, 1988, p. 3). Nine months after the pretest they observed that the gain in intellectual development of the two groups was not statistically different (Quine and Marek, 1988, p. 4). They also noted that “the data from this study seem to suggest that students taught at home move into formal thought between the ages of ten and eleven” which is considered to be above the national average (Quine and Marek, 1988, p. 5).

The critical thinking skills of homeschooled children have also been examined. De Oliveira, Watson, and Sutton (1994) examined “the differences in selected critical thinking skills among Christian college students who graduated from various educational settings” (De Oliveira, Watson, and Sutton, 1994, p. 2). Of the final sample of 789 freshman students, 486 students came from conventional Christian schools, 195 from public schools, 50 from Accelerated Christian Education schools, and 58 from home schools (De Oliveira, Watson, and Sutton, 1994, p. 2). The participants were given the California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST), which provides a measure of the following domains: overall critical thinking score, analysis, evaluation, inference, deductive reasoning, and inductive reasoning. They found no significant differences among the four groups of students in terms of (1) their overall CCTST critical thinking skill score, (2) their analysis, evaluation, and inference scores, and (3) their deductive

reasoning and inductive reasoning scores (De Oliveira, Watson, and Sutton, 1994, p. 4). When the four groups' scores were compared to norms provided by the CCTST, "the respective percentiles are as follows: Home school group (40<sup>th</sup> percentile), Christian school group (40<sup>th</sup> percentile), ACE school group (31<sup>st</sup> percentile), and public school group (31<sup>st</sup> percentile)" (De Oliveira, Watson, and Sutton, 1994, p. 4).

These studies suggest that, in terms of academic results, homeschooled children can fare as well as, and in some cases better than, formally educated children. When comparing the instruction at home with instruction at school Dreeben (1968) observed that "the school has no monopoly as an instructional agent", and therefore, "the school's peculiar competence must lie elsewhere" (p. 43). Dreeben concluded that "if the education of children were carried on primarily within the jurisdiction of the family, the nature of the experiences available in that setting would not provide conditions appropriate for acquiring those capacities that enable people to participate competently in the public realm" (1968, p. 65). Formal schooling, however, sufficiently equips students to live in a social world larger than the family. If Dreeben is correct, then homeschooling would be an inadequate socializing institution.

Chatham-Carpenter (1994) investigated the social opportunities of home schooled children by comparing 21 home schooled adolescents (between 12 years and 18 years) with 20 public schooled children in Oklahoma. She investigated whether or not there were significant differences (1) between the sizes of the social networks for each group, especially the number of contacts each group had with people younger, older, and the same age as themselves, (2) between the frequencies with which each group had social interactions, and (3) between the reported closeness of the relationships (Chatham-

Carpenter, 1994, p. 16). She found that there was no significant difference between the sizes of the social networks for each group. The home schooled children had more significant contact with older people than those at or more than two years below their age, while public schooled children had more peer contacts than those two years more or less than their age (Chatham-Carpenter, 1994, p. 19). “The homeschooling process does have the potential to restructure a child’s social world, in providing the home schooler more mixed-age than same-age interaction and socialization opportunities” (Chatham-Carpenter, 1994, p. 19). Regarding the frequency of contact she found that public schooled children made more contacts on a daily basis than the home schooled children. She concluded that “these results demonstrate that the schooling process does indeed make a difference in how often an adolescent interacts with his/her contacts” (Chatham-Carpenter, 1994, p. 20).

Several studies used the self-concept construct as an indicator of socialization, because it was assumed that children with a positive self image were “well-adjusted and inclined to be socially competent” (Hedin, 1991, p. 1). Hedin (1991) studied the self-concept of children between the fourth and sixth grades, in three different education settings: home schooling (37 children), private schooling (77 children), and public schooling children (134 children) from Texas Baptist churches. She used the Piers-Harris Children’s Self-Concept Scale (PHCSCS) to measure the self-concept of these children and observed that “no statistically significant differences were found across school type, grade, or gender in the overall self-concept scores of older children in Texas Baptist Churches”, and concluded that “if indeed there are no differences across

the groups, socialization may be more directly tied to factors other than influences within the school setting” (Hedin, 1991, p. 3-4).

Kitchen (1991), too, used self-concept as an indicator of socialization in studying the socialization of 22 home- and 25 conventionally (public and private)-schooled children. He used the Self-Esteem Index and concluded that “in three categories, Personal Security, Academic Competence, and Familial Acceptance, the home schooled group had higher percentages of children that scored above average when compared to the conventionally schooled children” (p.10). Kitchen also found that “the conventionally schooled children had 9% more children score higher on the Peer Popularity scale than homeschoolers” (1991, p. 10). Kitchen noted an inverse relationship between self esteem and peer popularity within his research population: with a rise in peer popularity, there was a negative effect on overall self-esteem (1991, p. 11). Kitchen cautioned against any generalization from these results, due to the fact that he used an availability sample and the public school participants had a return rate of 16% (1991, p. 11).

Kelley (1991) examined the self-concept of 67 home educated children, between the fourth and tenth grades in suburban Los Angeles. Using the PHCSCS, he found that approximately 50% of the home educated children were at or above the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile on the PHCSCS global scale, and 16.4 % of the home schooled children scored below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile (p. 7). On the PHCSCS subscales more than one-half of the home schooled children were at or above the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile on the Behavioral, Intellectual and School Status, Anxiety, and Happiness and Satisfaction subscales. More than one third of the home schooled children were above the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile on the Physical Appearance and Attributes subscale. The home-educated children’s scores on the



Popularity subscale were approximately the same as the PHCSCS norms, with 50.6 % below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile and 49.4 % above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile (p.8-9).

The above studies utilized the “self-concept” as an indicator of socialization. Francis and Keith (2000) were critical of the use of the self-concept as a means of measuring socialization because (1) the notion of self-esteem is unclear due to a lack of a standard definition; (2) Subjects may feel differently than what they actually report; and (3) There is debate over whether self-esteem is a specific or global trait (p. 4). In reviewing the socialization studies that utilize ‘self-concept’ they concluded that “they present rather impressive findings under the assumption that higher self-esteem is synonymous with appropriate social behavior” (Francis and Keith, 2000, p. 5). However, due to the reasons mentioned that assumption is not confirmed. As an alternative, they addressed the issue of socialization of home-schooled children through the use of a social skill measure “that examined parent’s perceptions of their children’s social skills” (Francis & Keith, 2004, p. 16). They compared 34 homeschooled children with 34 conventionally schooled children, between the ages of 5 and 18 from communities in rural, Western New York. “The home schooling parents nominated the conventionally educated participants. Specifically, home schooling parents were asked to name up to three same sex conventionally schooled friends of their home educated children who they believed were similar to their own children” (Francis and Keith, 2004, p. 17). Demographic information such as “the ages of the children participating, the amount of time each child was educated in a conventional or home school environment, residential location, parental occupation and educational levels, religious affiliation, and church attendance” was collected (Francis and Keith, 2004, p. 17). The one significant difference among

the demographic data was that “significantly more of the mothers in home schooled families reported being homemakers rather than working outside the home” (Francis and Keith, 2004, p. 19). The Social Skills Rating System (SSRS) parent form was used and it was found that “home-educated children were found to have higher total social skill standard scores than the matched group of conventionally educated students...One of the components of social skills, self-control, was statistically significant. Home-educated students showed statistically higher self-control scores than did paired conventionally schooled children” (Francis and Keith, 2004, p. 20). There was no significant difference in the total problem behavior standard scores.

Smedley (1992) wanted to measure the social maturity of home schooled students, but was skeptical of using “subjective internal states” as an indicator of socialization (p. 9). Instead, he measured the social maturity of homeschooled children from a communication perspective. According to Smedley, communication and socialization are viewed as inseparable components because “communication is the means by which people create social reality” (Smedley, 1992, p. 9). Children who communicate well with others skillfully partake of this shared social reality (p. 10). Adequate socialization is indicated by adequate communication. Smedley used the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales (VABS) to study the social maturity of 33 children (16 females and 17 males) from white, middle class families and compared them with children who attended similar churches as the home educated students, but attended public schools. Smedley found that “the mean Adaptive Behavior Composite score for the homeschooled children is in the 84<sup>th</sup> percentile; The control group score placed them in the 23<sup>rd</sup> percentile...In terms of the socialization subcategory score, the home school

students rank in the top 27%. The public school students ranked with the top 75 %” (Smedley, 1992, p. 12). He concluded that the home schooled children are “more mature and better socialized than those who are sent to school” (1992, p. 12). Smedley hypothesized that the reason for the difference in maturity has to do with the “impoverished” communication that occurs in school:

The classroom is mostly one-way communication, along stereotyped and rote channels...Given the size of classes, few meaningful interchanges are possible on a given day between teacher and individual student. This contrasts to the home education communication environment...Each child at home has immediate access to the attention of a significant adult. (1992, p. 12)

Smedley also noted the “unnatural” age segregation that occurs in conventional schooling and suggested that this may impede the socialization function of schools (p. 13). According to Arendt (1977), in the American school system the “normal relations between children and adults, arising from the fact that people of all ages are always simultaneously together in the world, are...broken off...Children have been so to speak banished from the world of grown-ups” (p. 181). Therefore, the idea of schooling as a socializing agent is paradoxical: Although schools are expected to prepare children for the adult world, they effectively remove children from the adult world (Gatto, 1992; Illich, 1971).

Shyers (1992) utilized a varied approach in examining the social adjustment of home educated children. For Shyers a socially well adjusted child is (1) knowledgeable of appropriate social skill, (2) comfortable learning and performing the appropriate responses, and (3) performs social skills that are deemed acceptable by others (1992, p. 1-2). He utilized Children’s Assertive Behavior Scale (CABS) to assess the first, the PHCSCS to examine the second, and the Direct Observation Form (DOF) of the Child

Behavior Checklist to measure the third (Shyers, 1992, p. 1-2). Seventy home schooled children (35 males and 35 females) between the ages of 8 and 10, and seventy traditionally schooled children (35 males and 35 females) between the ages of 8 and 10 were chosen for this study. Shyers found no significant differences between the groups in terms of knowledge of appropriate behavior and the self-assuredness to perform the appropriate behavior. However, he found that when video tapes of small groups of these children playing were observed by trained observers (graduates students in counselor education or individuals with an advanced degree in counseling), home schooled students “had lower problem behavior DOF scores than did the traditional school students” (Shyers, 1992, p. 5). Shyers noted, as did Smedley, that home schooled students spent most of their day with their parents and with very few children and concluded that:

Based on the social learning theory that children learn by imitating the behaviors of people whom they observe, home schooled children would thus most likely imitate the behaviors of their parents. If children have fewer problem behaviors due to imitating adult behaviors, as suggested by this study, less emphasis may need to be placed on social interactions between children. (Shyers, 1992, p. 6)

Shyers assumed that the homeschool setting affords the child a better opportunity to imitate the behavior of adults. This assumption contrasts with the assumptions made by Smedley. For Smedly, the structure of homeschooling affords the opportunity for the child to communicate, and therefore take part in creating the social reality of homeschooling.

Medlin (2006) studied the social skills of homeschooled children from the children’s point of view. Although he acknowledged the inherent risk in asking children to evaluate their behavior he concluded that children “experience the social exchanges in

which they participate with an intimacy and immediacy that no outside observer can. And they judge the success or failure of those exchanges according to criteria that adults may not even be aware of. Without this perspective, therefore, children's social skills cannot be fully understood" (p. 2). Using the Social Skills Rating System, Student Form, Elementary Level he evaluated seventy homeschooled children (32 boys and 38 girls) in grades three through six. He compared the homeschooled group with the standardization sample of the SSRS, which included 1,170 public schooled children from grades three through six. His evaluation discovered that homeschooled children rated themselves higher in all four of the skills tested (cooperation, assertiveness, empathy, and self control) and he concluded that "there appears to be, therefore, a convergence of evidence from three different perspectives- parental report, objective observers, and self-report- that homeschooled children's social skills are exceptional" (Medlin, 2006, p. 6).

The above research studies have examined the cognitive and social skills of homeschooled children. As mentioned above, home schooling is a structure that is organized differently than the structure of conventional schooling (Allie-Carson, 1990; Ray and Wartes, 1991; Romanowski, 2002). Despite this different organization it appears as if homeschooled children learn and are socialized as well as children educated in a formal educational structure. Other research studies have examined how literacy is utilized within homeschooling. If children learn as well as formally-schooled children and are socialized as well as formally-schooled children, then one question that can be posed is whether or not literacy is integrated within homeschooling in ways that are similar to formal schooling.

## 2.2 Literacy within Homeschooling

There are several studies that have examined the literacy practices of homeschooling families. Treat (1990) noted that although “reading and writing processes are the very elements of educational growth...thus far home school research has given minimal attention to these areas” (p. 9). She used an exploratory case study method to study the home-schooling literacy instruction of a ‘third-grade’ student over a three month period in order to “describe the learning environment of one homeschool family, to identify social and linguistic interactions among family members during literate activities, and to determine how the parents envisioned themselves to be teachers of reading and writing” (Treat, 1990, p. 13). To that end Treat analyzed written documents, interviews, writing samples, and audio recorded data. She identified four styles of interaction between the parent and child: Generalization, which “begins with a focusing idea that becomes generalized and personalized into a specific pattern of conversations...Ideas are formed and shaped in myriad ways as speakers repeat and adapt them according to their own prior knowledge” (Treat, 1990, p. 15). Questioning is a technique that is used “to invite the negotiation of meaning or to pre-empt an immediate response (Treat, 1990, p. 15). Collaboration refers to the way in which children and parents devised the curriculum. Treat noted that “the family collaborated by taking many field trips, planning science experiments together, creating a family newspaper, writing in the family journal, listening to texts read aloud on trips and, participating in the home school process, which itself represents a family project” (Treat, 1990, p. 15). Finally, Refocusing refers to the way in which a change was made in the direction of a teaching episode (Treat,

1990, p. 15). Treat also observed four patterns of language use within the process of teaching reading and writing.

The repetition pattern involves consecutive verbal exchanges that replicate the same words... The comparison pattern suggests that this family has a wealth of ideas and experiences upon which they can draw in order to illustrate by analogy... Definition makes explicit understanding that might otherwise remain tacit... The mother relied on six different ways to explain the meaning of the word. Through the definition pattern, each parent personalized new concepts by translating them into a family language of shared meanings. Identification, like definition, represents this family's interest in referring by name to the objects, events, and interactions in their daily lives. (Treat, 1990, pp. 15-17)

Within home schools the process of education is personalized in the sense that references made by the parent and child are personally relevant to both the parent and the child. This contrasts with the structure of formal schooling, where the teachers' references have to be general enough to be relevant to substantially more students with whom the teacher does not share a personal relationship. Serpell and Hatano (1997) observed that one of the consequences of formal schooling is that the practical relevance of the skills taught is vague. Given the context of the homeschooling family that Treat observed explanations were personalized and brought into the context of the family's daily life. The structure of homeschooling is such that there are a significantly smaller number of students than there are in formal schooling, and those students in homeschooling have a closer relationship to the teacher than the students in formal schooling have. Treat's study was of one family. It is important to question whether or not these patterns are something that are intrinsic to that family structure, or if the patterns of interactions and language use can be found across different types of homeschooling families.

Gilmore (2003) used an ethnomethodological approach to study how two rural home education families “manage literacy education, and in particular, reading aloud to students” (p. 11). She spent six hours per day, one day per week, over a seven-month period with each family. She used a constant-comparative method “to understand the dialogues that took place in the homeschools” (Gilmore, 2003, p. 14). Gilmore noted that “students who are in supportive home school environments receive the maximum benefit of being read aloud to by their parents” (Gilmore, 2003, p. 17). The unique structure of home education allowed for unique interactions in the reading patterns of parents and children. Thus Gilmore found interactions within homeschooling that do not exist within formal schooling. For example, she found that both of the primary child participants (two nine-year-olds) were able to sit on their mothers’ laps or beside their mothers while reading aloud. One of the children read to her younger siblings and both children were “free to read their books wherever they wanted throughout the house” (Gilmore, 2003, p. 17). Both children scored above the 91st percentile in reading achievement on the California Achievement Test for the Fourth Grade. Gilmore cautioned about the generalization of these results, noting that they “can only be generalized to the two home schools I visited, but there may be some similarities between these homeschools and the general home school population” (Gilmore, 2003, p. 17). Due to the small sample size of this study more research is needed on homeschooling reading practices.

Huber (2003) studied the writing instruction of six families, whose children were between the ages of formally schooled ninth and twelfth graders. She mapped her descriptions of the instruction onto a continuum developed by Baseman (1989). This



continuum describes the opposite poles of home school settings as “learner-structured” and “teacher structured”. A Learner-Structured program contains integrated, adult-oriented subjects that emphasizes the learning process and encourages independence (Huber, 2003, p. 2). A Teacher-Structured program separates subjects and emphasizes the teaching product and encourages dependence. Huber observed that

A family-by-family blending of components empowers extensive pedagogical variation. Projecting these sometimes contradictory choices onto a continuum stretching from total parent structure on one end to total learner structure on the other illuminates nuances of writing instruction that are inaccessible with other analytic methods. This study employs that pattern. First, it holistically overviews homeschool writing instruction as variegated exemplars of language arts training structured by parents, parents/learners, or learners. Then, reflecting available curricular materials, the study qualitatively documents and analyzes the perspectives, teaching approaches, relationships, and writing experiences of six Pennsylvania homeschool families as separate yet mutually impacting components diversely structured by parents, parents/learners, or learners. (2003, p. 3)

In terms of writing instruction, a parent-structured curriculum generally involved a parent who is in control of the instruction and imparts knowledge of phonics and grammar to the learner (Huber, 2003, p. 3). Huber noted that this stimuli-response-evaluation process of these kinds of curricula is based on behaviorist assumptions. Learner-Structured curricula are more collaborative, which means that “language concepts and writing skills are not considered artifacts transferable from teacher to student; instead, they are treated as products of sharing communicative tasks” (Huber, 2003, p. 5). These programs draw their inspiration

from a cognitive apprenticeship or novice-expert model of education and a collaborative theory of learning. The apprenticeship model suggests that learning to write involves using one’s emerging writing skills to act out real life communication tasks under the supervision of a skilled communicator. Knowledgeable peers or experts demonstrate whatever processes are necessary for mastery. Novices observe, then replicate what they have seen, accepting scaffolding or coaching at points of need. As learners develop expertise,

collaborators slowly fade or remove their support and hand responsibility to the emerging 'experts'. (p. 4)

Between these poles lies the Parent/Learner structure in which "Instructors encourage writers to explore their personal knowledge and experiences, to develop control of their thinking processes, to dialogue and collaborate, and to practice the conventions of targeted discourse communities. This approach empowers families to diversify their curriculum or to satisfy transitory curiosities" (Huber, 2003, p. 7).

In her explorative-descriptive case study of six home schooling families Huber (2004) noted that the kinds of writing instruction chosen by each family are influenced by the reasons for homeschooling and the family dynamics in which homeschooling occurs. "Because they [homeschools] operate as dyads of parent-educators and children-learners, weaving webs of personal meaning, their learning perspectives, teaching approaches, and interpersonal relationships are family specific" (Huber, 2004, p. 10). She concluded that

homeschooling families are positioned to uniquely integrate living and learning in ways that foster writing development... Homeschool living choices and teaching practices idiosyncratically determine the range of writing that students experience and the sophistication of their composing processes... Policymakers need to understand homeschooling as an educational alternative in which writing can be learned/taught in a variety of ways. (Huber, 2004, pp. 11-12)

This study highlights the differences that exist, not only between homeschooling and formal schooling, but also among homeschool families. Huber's sample size was also small and she pointed to the need to "develop an extensive database of knowledge about the living arrangements, teaching approaches, and writing experiences that construct and constrain how writers mature" (p. 10). Also, Huber's study examined adolescent children. More research into the literacy practices of younger children is needed. My

study will look at the ways in which family literacy practices are integrated within specific educational activities that do occur in the home.

## 2.3 Summary

In the chapter above I presented a brief description of the different kinds of homeschooling, the reasons why parents homeschool their children, and a review of the research on homeschooling. Generally speaking, most of the research focuses on the areas regarding the academic achievement of and the socialization of homeschooled children. Finally, I reviewed the studies that have examined how literacy is used within homeschooling. Below I will describe the method of analysis for this study, how participants for the study were selected, and the kinds of data collected for analysis.

# Chapter 3

## Methods of Data-Collection and Analysis

### 3.1 Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the literacy practices of homeschooling families. Specifically, I set out to answer the following questions:

- How is homeschooling both similar to and different from formal schooling?
- What are the literacy practices of homeschooling?
  - What are the tools used in these practices?
  - What are the knowledge and skills used in these practices?
  - What are the goals of these practices?
- What are the consequences of literacy within homeschooling?

As described above, it is believed that literacy and formal schooling may have similar kinds of consequences for the development of children. For example, both are believed to aid the development of abstract thinking, categorization, independence, autonomy, and logical thinking. However, since literacy and formal schooling usually occur together, it is difficult to separate their individual consequences. Homeschooling is important because it may present a context in which literacy and formal schooling are separated. The purpose of the first question is to examine how different the educational structures of the two homeschooling families presented were different than formal schooling. That is, to what extent do the homeschooling families offer an environment where literacy and formal schooling were separated from one another.

I have already mentioned one study that attempted to distinguish the effects of literacy from those of formal schooling. Scribner and Cole (1981) studied the Vai

people in Liberia and developed the notion of a practice as a “goal-directed sequence of activities using a particular technology and particular systems of knowledge” (p. 236). Literacy may not merely be a cognitive skill, but a tool intimately connected to the activities in which it is used. This establishes the basis for the second question, which looks at literacy within homeschooling as a unified phenomenon. The skills associated with literacy are inherent, not in reading and writing per se, but in the uses to which they are put. That is, literacy may not be a self-contained set of skills and that can be pulled from and dropped into any context. Therefore, I will examine whether or not literacy and homeschooling offer a unique synthesis, and, if so, what that synthesis is. The third question will address the consequences that arise out of this synthesis. If homeschooling literacy practices are different from formal schooling literacy practices, then the consequences for the participants may also be different.

Next I will explain why the case study method is the best method to answer the research questions stated above, how the families were selected for the study, the kind of data gathered, and the way in which the data were analyzed.

### 3.2 Case Study Method

A case study method was appropriate given the context of homeschooling. A case study is an “intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit” (Merriam, 1998, p. 34) and is characterized “by the main researcher spending substantial time, on site, personally in contact with activities and operations of the case, reflecting, revising meanings of what is going on” (Stake, 1998, p. 99). By characterizing case studies as being “in contact” with “what is going on” a case study

method presented the opportunity to observe and describe events as they were happening, rather than retroactively studying the outcome of what happened. Therefore, a case study method is particularly suitable for studying a process or an activity (Merriam, 1998; Tellis, 1997). For Vygotsky (1978), in order to adequately explain the essence of a phenomenon it is necessary to understand the process by which that phenomenon came to be.

The object of a case study has been described as being “bounded” (Merriam, 1998, p. 27). This means the objects are understood as occurring within a limited context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Therefore, the case study method emphasizes a detailed, contextual analysis of a limited number of events. The object of study is not only bounded, but is also considered to be a holistic system of action (Yin, 2003; Feagin, Orum, & Sjorberg, 1990). Rather than analyzing the discrete parts of an interaction, a case study considers these interactions as an integrated whole, whose parts are configured in a particular way. Rather than focusing only on individuals, a case study method allowed me to observe the relationship and actions that occur between the individuals involved in homeschooling.

Merriam (1998) argued that “the less control an investigator has over a contemporary set of events and/or if the variables are so embedded in the situation as to be impossible to identify ahead of time, case study is likely to be the best choice” (p. 32-33). Similarly, Yin believed that “the case study is preferred in examining contemporary events, but when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated... you would use a case study method because you deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions-believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study” (2003. p. 7, 13). Due to the variety and wide flexibility of home-education practices (Lande, 1996), variables

such as where teaching takes place, when it takes place, etc., are difficult to know prior to the investigation, and these are subject to change on a daily basis. Therefore, a method open to the uncertain nature of what is being studied and which does not require strict control over variables was required to study home education.

Freebody (2003) asserted that in the field of education in general, case study research has been a prominent research method due to the vague and overly-generalized conclusions offered by research that utilizes a traditional, more experimentally-oriented method:

Case study methodologies stress that teachers are always teaching some subject matter, with some particular learners, in particular places and under conditions that significantly shape and temper teaching and learning practices. These conditions are not taken to be 'background' variables, but rather lived dimensions that are indigenous to each teaching-learning event. (p. 81)

Traditional research methods utilize a nomothetic approach which attempts to determine what is considered average of a particular population. The case study method is idiographic in nature in that it focuses on nuances and subtleties that nomothetic approaches miss (Freebody, 2003, p. 36). A case study focuses on what is distinct about a particular educational phenomenon. Since it is unlikely that any two home-school settings are completely alike, due to the wide amount of variability the practice has, a method that is designed to describe particularity is necessary.

To summarize, I used a case study method to study home education because this method is (1) open to process, (2) focused on the interactions between individuals, (3) flexible enough to deal with variables and situations out of the researcher's control, and (4) is receptive to particularity and specificity. This method is appropriate to address the research questions for several reasons. First, the question concerning the similarity and

differences between homeschooling and formal schooling requires the researcher to observe and assess variables (e.g., the time of day homeschooling occurs, how the day is organized, where homeschooling takes place, etc.) that are outside of the researcher's control. Secondly, the notion of literacy as a practice assumes that literacy is not a disparate set of skills, but an applied knowledge "for specific purposes in specific contexts of use" (Scribner and Cole, 1981, p. 236). Therefore, a method that is open to the particularity and specificity of the situation is valuable. Finally, the consequences of homeschooling develop from the interaction between the child and parent within the home. That is, these variables cannot be separated or interpreted apart from one another. The case study is sensitive to the holistic nature of educational practices.

### 3.3 Participant Selection

Participants for this study were recruited through various local home schooling associations. The following is a list of homeschooling organizations that were contacted, via mail and e-mail with information about the study:

- Alle-Kifki Home Education Network
- Christian Homeschoolers of Mercer County
- Cranberry Christian Homeschoolers
- Ellwood City Home Education Network
- Family Instructors of the South Hills
- HomeSchoolers of Allegheny Valley Education Network
- North Hills Christian Homeschoolers
- North Pittsburgh Catholic Homeschoolers
- People Always Learning Something
- Pittsburgh Airport Area Homeschoolers
- Pittsburgh East Suburban Homeschoolers' Association
- South Pittsburgh Catholic Homeschoolers
- Southwestern Pennsylvania Home Education Network



This list of homeschooling organizations was generated by an internet search of homeschooling organizations located in Western Pennsylvania. The organizations were asked to share information about the study with their members, and pass on the contact information of the researcher to interested parents. First contact was initiated by the families. At the time of the initial contact I reviewed selection criteria and the level of involvement required with the participants, and answered any questions the parents had. After the initial e-mail was sent 10 families contacted me (6 via e-mail and 4 via telephone) requesting more information. After supplying additional information 5 families agreed to participate in the interviews. Of these five, four agreed to participate in the observation portion of the study. Of the four families, two are presented in the analysis. Pseudonyms for the participants are used in the written reports. The first family presented, the Smiths (Chapter 4), consists of two parents (mother and father) and one child. The father works full-time, and the mother stays home and homeschools their son. The second family presented, the Jones (Chapter 5), also consist of two parents (mother and father), but they have two children. However, only one child, the son, is being homeschooled. As in the first family the father works full time and the mother is responsible for the homeschooling activities. Of the other two families who are not presented here, one contained one parent teaching four children, some of whom had attended formal schools. The other family consisted of one parent teaching one child. That child also had previously been enrolled in formal school. Since one of the functions of the study was to examine literacy apart from the consequences of formal schooling these two families were not included in the final analysis.

The homeschooling group People Always Learning Something (PALS) was the source of the two families whose literacy practices are analyzed here. According to the group's Yahoo discussion message board PALS

is an unaffiliated group of homeschoolers from Pittsburgh and surrounding areas whose members are tolerant of all styles of homeschooling, home education and learning at home. PALS is an open and inclusive homeschooling group with no religious affiliation, which does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, sexual orientation, homeschooling style or one's personal lifestyle choices. PALS is a group that accepts all who homeschool or have a positive interest in homeschooling and everyone is encouraged to participate in and/or plan activities" (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/palscommunity/>).

The one participant who was interviewed but did not participate in the observations reported that she is on several different mailing lists and was not sure through which organization she received information on the study.

### 3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Several different procedures were used to gather data for this study: Interviews with both parents, observations of the homeschooling activities, recordings of the interactions between the mother and the child, collecting a journal from each mother, and collecting artifacts that the children produced during the course of the literacy practices. Freebody (2003) noted that "case studies are empirically omnivorous: the data that make up a case study can entail observations, interviews, transcripts, notes, documents (syllabus, assessment records), and so on" (p. 82). The wide range of data available in a case study is advantageous because it enhances the validity of the study. "The most important advantage presented by using multiple sources of evidence is the development of converging lines of inquiry...Any finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be much more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different

sources of information” (Yin, 2003, p. 98). This type of convergence is also known as triangulation, and occurs when the research findings are supported by more than one source of evidence (Wiersma, 1995; Yin, 2003). For this study I used five different sources of data: Interviews; Observations; Transcripts of audio-recorded, representative sessions of instruction, Journals, and Artifacts.

### 3.4.1 Interviews

I used a semi-structured interview at the beginning of this study. The interview was designed to discover the reasons parents had for homeschooling and to obtain a description of how homeschooling was structured in each family. The interviews were analyzed by collecting the elements of how the homeschooling day was structured (e.g., when it started, how the subjects were organized, where it occurred, how often (daily, monthly, and yearly, what kind of materials were used, assessments, etc.) and these were compared to the structural features of formal schooling in order to assess how similar to and different the homeschooling structure was from formal schooling.

In addition to these, the interviews also revealed the process by which the parents taught their children to read, and how learning to read had changed the way in which homeschooling is done. The following is a list of questions that were asked:

1. Tell me the reasons why you decided to homeschool your child.
2. What do you want to accomplish by homeschooling your child?
3. How will the “schooling” element be structured?
4. What subjects are you teaching?
5. How will you teach them?
6. Where will you be teaching them?
7. How will the school days be organized?
8. Are there set starting and ending times?
9. What are the exceptions, if any, to these times?
10. Will any “schooling” occur on the weekend or in the evenings?

11. What, if any, outside-the-home-resources will be used?  
e.g., Attendance at Museums, Libraries, etc?
12. What is the child's involvement with activities outside the home?
13. How will you evaluate the child's progress?
14. How will you teach your child to read?
15. What instructional approaches will you use?
16. What resources, books, computer programs, etc. will you use?
17. How will you evaluate your child's progress?
18. How will you teach your child to write?
19. What instructional approaches will you use?
20. What resources, books, computer programs, etc. will you use?
21. How will you evaluate your child's progress?
22. Tell me about your child's reading activities/habits before you decided to homeschool.
23. Has anything changed since you started homeschooling?
24. Have activities/reading habits changed? If so, what has changed?
25. Have reading materials changed? If so, what has changed?

### 3.4.2 Observations

I observed several homeschooling sessions of each family over several weeks during the Spring of 2007. Due to the informal nature of homeschooling explicit instructional events, such as teaching the sounds of letters, may blend in with less explicit instructional events, such as reading a story to the child. I was interested in observing and analyzing both the explicit instructional events, as well as the less explicit instructional events. The length of the observations and the times they occurred depended on each individual family. For example, the family presented in Chapter 4, the Smiths, had daily sessions that lasted between 9am and approximately 2 pm. The family presented in Chapter 5, the Jones, had sessions that only lasted thirty minutes. During the observations I recorded general features of the interactions, including where it took place, how long it took, who was involved, who initiated the interactions, the materials used etc. These observations generated evidence regarding how homeschooling is similar to and different than formal schooling.

I began this study with the assumption that my presence in the home of families had the potential to change the activities that the family was doing. Due to the informal nature of homeschooling, it does not require a set time for activities to occur. However, by merely scheduling time for observation, the families may have felt compelled to do something while I was there. For example, during one observation period a six-year-old boy became noticeably uncooperative and his mother told me “normally this would be when we stop.” Later she asked “can we be done now?” Due to its loose structure homeschooling practice can adapt itself to daily events. On the days I was present in the home it is possible that some of the activities were adapted to accommodate me.

### 3.4.3 Audio Recordings and Transcripts

The interactions between parent and child were audio-recorded and transcribed. According to Goodwin and Heritage (1990) “social interaction is the primordial means through which the business of the social world is transacted, the identities of the participants are affirmed or denied, and its cultures are transmitted, renewed, and modified” (p. 283). And, according to Freebody (2003),

it is through communication that the social order in which educational activities takes place is itself displayed, and thereby given structure and significance. The normativities of teaching and learning-what is normal, proper and appropriate in this educational setting, here and now-are made available to teachers and learners in talk, and in the varieties of other communicational forms they use... Novices are acculturated into these domains through other symbolic artifacts. As well, novices navigate their way and use these artifacts on the basis of their encounters with the ‘expert navigators’... All of these domains of learning are embedded in interaction, moment to moment, in educational events. (p. 91)

Therefore, analysis of the talk and communication patterns of homeschooling was important, since it would reveal the way in which children were acculturated. All cultural process, including the learning and teaching of literacy and language, occur

during structured interactions (Haas Dyson & Genishi, 2005). Also, if interactions are how identities are affirmed and denied, analysis of homeschooling interactions would reveal how the identities of the children were affirmed and denied, which would indicate the kinds of changes made by the homeschooling process.

#### 3.4.4 Journal Writings

Parents were asked to record, on a daily basis, descriptions of any reading events that occurred for approximately two weeks. Pre-made journal forms were provided to the families to facilitate this process. Parents were asked to describe what occurred (e.g., read a book), how the incident started (e.g., child asked me to read a book), where and when this occurred (e.g., in the kitchen, after lunch), how long it lasted (e.g., fifteen minutes), and why it ended (e.g., finished a chapter). These journal entries served two purposes: First, they added to the number of descriptions of reading events collected by the researcher, via observation, thereby providing more data for the study. Also, as I mentioned above, I recognized early on in the study that my presence in the home might change the informal character of homeschooling. In other words, parents would schedule explicit reading sessions so I had something to observe. However, scheduling may not have been a regular feature of that particular family. Therefore, having some record of what occurred when the researcher was not present would add to the reliability of the study.

#### 3.4.5 Artifacts

Merriam (1998) noted that artifacts are “a product of the context in which they were produced and therefore grounded in the real world” (p. 126). Artifacts are things

produced by people within a given situation, and may be representative of that situation. Therefore, artifacts that are produced within the context of homeschooling may be representative of what occurs within homeschooling. Artifacts collected and analyzed included writing samples, the reading curriculum used, as well as other materials that were used in the context of homeschooling reading activities. Artifacts may be representative of the skills and norms taught and may provide examples of the tools that are used to navigate the social world of homeschooling.

The tables below (3.1, 3.2, and 3.3) relate each research question to the data source that provided answers to that question (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). Also, a brief explanation as to how each data source contributed to the answering of the research questions is included. Each question is supported by at least three different sources of data, thus adding to the reliability of the study:

Table 3.1: Research Question #1 and Data Sources

| <b>1. How is homeschooling both similar to and different from formal schooling?</b>          |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Interviews</b>  | <b>Observations</b>  | <b>Journals</b>  |
| Reveal the presence and absence of features of homeschooling that resemble formal schooling. | Reveal the presence and absence of features of homeschooling that resemble formal schooling. | Reveal the presence and absence of features of homeschooling that resemble formal schooling. |

Table 3.2: Research Question #2 and Data Sources

| <b>2. What are the literacy practices of homeschooling?</b><br>a) <b>What are the tools used in these practices?</b><br>b) <b>What are the knowledge and skills used in these practices?</b><br>c) <b>What are the goals of these practices?</b> |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Observations   | Interviews   | Transcripts  | Journals   | Artifacts  |
| Observations about the curriculum being used, as well as the skills involved in using it.  | Interviews will reveal details about the curriculum used and the parents' reasons for homeschooling. Interviews will also provide another perspective on the goals of the practices. | Describe the sequence of literacy practices, which will reveal the knowledge and normative activities involved that shape the identity of the participants. Reveal what the participants do with literacy. | Describe the literacy practices of the families that occur when the researcher is not present. | Analysis of curriculum will yield evidence about the technology used; Writing samples will yield evidence of the knowledge and skills involved in the practices. |

Table 3.3: Research Question #3 and Data Sources

| <b>3. What are the consequences of homeschooling literacy practices?</b> |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| Observations   | Transcripts  | Artifacts   |
| Observe what the children do during and after the interactions.          | Will reveal the outcomes of the literacy practices on a micro level; they will reveal what the interactions have accomplished. | Writing samples will reveal what the children have learned or are learning to do. |

### 3.5 Methods of Analysis

In this study I employed two levels of analysis: (1) within-case analysis and (2) cross-case analysis. The within-case level refers to the analysis of data acquired on each particular family. The data within each case included the observations, transcripts, interviews, journals, and artifacts of the particular families. The data gathered from each family were first analyzed separately. The interviews, observations, and journals



revealed the general characteristics of the homeschooling families. These characteristics included descriptions such as how often instruction occurred on a daily, weekly, and yearly basis; the location of the instruction; the curriculum and methods of evaluation used; and extracurricular activities such as trips to libraries and museums. These characteristics were summarized and compared to the characteristics of formal schooling mentioned in Chapter 1. This analysis revealed the ways in which each homeschooling context was similar to and different from formal schooling. The analysis can be depicted in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: Homeschooling Data Comparison to Formal Schooling Structure

| Data Sources:                          | Data organized according to:  | Data compared to formal school structure:   |
|--|-------------------------------|---|
| Interviews<br>Observations<br>Journals | Time (Frequency and duration) | Between 8 and 2, Monday thru Friday, from August to June  |
|  | Place                         | Specialized location that is only used for education  |
|  | Relationships                 | Teachers and students do not know each other outside of school;<br>Students in classroom with other students of approximately the same age. |
|  | Evaluations                   | Tests, Homework, Worksheets, Report cards   |
|  | Outside resources             | Field trips   |
|  | Interactions                  | Initiation-Response-Evaluation  |

The data collected in the interviews, observations, transcripts, journals, and artifacts were analyzed in order to reveal features of the literacy practices. As mentioned earlier, Harman (1987) observed that “at its simplest, literacy refers to reading and writing abilities” but that “the terms reading and writing, which form the core of literacy, in fact establish very little. They do not, for instance, convey any notion of the content or uses of what is read and written” (p. 3). The data was analyzed in order to clarify the use of

reading and writing in homeschooling. The analysis of the transcripts began by, first, isolating the general reading or writing tasks in which the participants were engaged. For example, Ms. Smith began the assignment of having Connor write a summary of a story. Ms. Jones was helping Charles organize words into grammatical categories. Within these tasks were smaller mini-lessons that contributed to the completion of the larger task. For example, Ms. Smith reminded Connor of the “who, what, when, where, why, how” tool that helped Connor complete the summary. Ms. Jones introduced definitions to help Charles categorize words. Reading and writing were used throughout in order to complete these tasks. Examining the interactions between the participants at various times during the larger lesson demonstrated how the use of reading and writing aided in the completion of these tasks. A comparison of what the children did (or did not do) before and after the introduction of certain tools within the literacy practices was made. The transcripts revealed how literacy was used in the daily tasks involved in homeschooling, and how literacy was used to direct the child’s activities and behavior in order to solve problems such as spell words correctly, write essays, and summarize stories.

The interactions that structured these lessons typically produced an artifact, a visual depiction of what the children accomplished. These artifacts could then be compared to other artifacts that may have been produced when the researcher was not present or during times that were not considered to be part of homeschooling. These similarities between these artifacts (and the skills and activities involved in producing them) demonstrated some continuity between the literacy practices considered to be part of homeschooling and activities that take place outside of homeschooling. The journals

were analyzed for similar reasons. Although only one family (the Jones) completed this task, this family's description of the literacy practices in which they engaged over a two week period allowed for a comparison with what I had observed. Although only one family completed the journal entries, the Smiths made available a journal that their child kept on his own. The content of this journal was used for a comparison with the artifacts produced during homeschooling.

Each of the families observed was analyzed and presented as a case in and of itself in order to analyze the relationship between the variables of the specific homeschool structure and the family's literacy practices. Contextual variables such as where education took place, what time it took place, how long it lasted, how it was initiated, who initiated it, etc., as well as the effect the structure had on the norms developed within each structure, were examined. Multiple data sources were used to answer the research questions and support the conclusions reached. The Smiths will be presented in Chapter 4 and the Jones will be presented in Chapter 5.

In my research I collected data and interpreted the interactions between parents and children that occurred within the context of literacy practices. Since I studied two different families a collective or multiple case study method was used. A collective case study refers to several case studies of multiple examples and "is a common strategy for enhancing the external validity or generalizability of" the findings (Merriam, 1998, p. 40). In Chapter 6 I will present an analysis of the similarities and differences between the structure of the homeschooling families and the literacy practices involved. Although both families made distinctions between different types of learning (e.g., explicit homeschooling and, according to Ms. Smith, "homeschooling that isn't

homeschooling”) the two factors mentioned above made these distinctions less rigid. Although the distinctions between formal education and informal education are often presented as opposites, Greenfield and Lave observed that “educational formality is more a continuum than a pair of opposites. In addition, all societies in the world provide several different types of education to their members, and these types differ in how formal they are” (1982, p. 182). These families appeared to confirm the notion that the formal/informal dichotomy is more of a continuum.

Although the two families presented here shared some features of formal education, they shared two features with each other that sharply distinguished them from formal education: (1) a low adult-to-child ratio and (2) the participants had relationships with one another, apart from the teacher-student relationship.

# Chapter 4

## First Homeschooling Family- The Smiths

### 4.1 The Smiths

In this chapter I will present an analysis of the first family, the Smiths. This chapter contains the reasons why the Smiths chose to homeschool their child, Connor. It will also present a description of the homeschooling structure and how that structure is similar to and different than formal schooling. This analysis is based on the interviews with, and observations of, the family. After this I will present an analysis of some of the literacy practices in which the family engaged. The analysis will reveal skills such as categorization, analysis, synthesis, abstraction, summarizing, and self-reflection used collaboratively to complete tasks such as organizing money, organizing daily activities, writing a thank-you letter, and evaluating writing. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the possible consequences of these practices.

The first homeschooling family presented, the Smiths, lived within the city limits and consisted of two parents, Madeline and Donald, and their son, Connor. Connor was an only child and this makes this family atypical among homeschooling families in that only approximately 14% of homeschooling households have one child (Bielick, Chandler, & Broughman, 2001). Connor was 7-years, 8-months old at the time the data was collected. Madeline reported that she initially had reservations about

homeschooling and said that she is “kind of surprised we’re doing it” because “it seemed really weird.” She admitted that before looking into the practice she had preconceptions about the motivation of parents who homeschool. According to Madeline “I had a cousin who had done it and it seemed...like they wanted to protect the kids from the world, and sort of narrow their world.” Donald shared these preconceptions, as he admitted that he had a vision of homeschooled children having “no social skills” because they were “too sequestered, sheltered from the world” and had “parents making the decision because they are afraid of the world or because they have this need to control every aspect.” However they admitted that their opinions changed when they began examining the educational options they had for Connor. The Waldorf School was their first choice, but, due to financial constraints, they “decided to go with homeschooling.” After they researched homeschooling Madeline discovered that “the kids were not just fine, but really nice and confident and joyful and comfortable with adults.” Madeline acknowledged several shortcomings that she saw in public schools, including the lack of the development of critical thinking skills in children and the behavior of small children. According to her, “kindergarteners are mean.” Madeline also said she wished to keep Connor “sheltered from, um, consumerism.” This admission is noteworthy in that she and Donald had used words such as “protect”, “sheltered”, and “sequestered” when discussing their preconceived criticism of homeschooling families. However, Madeline now seemed to approve of a protective aspect of homeschooling.

## 4.2 Homeschooling Structure

The one organizational aspect of this homeschooling family that sharply distinguished it from formal schooling is that it featured one parent teaching one child. This close, personal relationship between student and teacher and the small adult to child ratio is something not usually found in formal schooling. However, when asked to describe other organizational features of her homeschooling practices, Madeline described several resources and concepts that are usually associated with formal schooling. She stated that “we did kindergarten here and first grade here and we’re doing second grade here.” When asked how she understood those terms (kindergarten, first grade, and second grade) within the context of homeschooling, she explained that she had researched the website of a local private school “to see what they were covering and then got some books from Barnes and Noble.” According to Madeline “there are curricula available that cover standard skills and subject areas in each grade... as far as the curriculum, we’re following, there’s one called The Well Trained Mind and it’s a classical curriculum written by a woman [Susan Weis Bauer] who is now a college professor who herself was homeschooled.” In addition to utilizing a formal schooling website for content, a curriculum, and the concept of grades and grade-appropriate skills, Madeline also used bookstores and the public library to supplement the material. She described the library as “helpful” and said that “homeschoolers couldn’t do homeschooling without a public library.”

The temporal structure of homeschooling for this family also resembled a structure that is found in formal schooling. Their daily schedule begins at approximately the same time every day, and is organized according to subject matter. According to Madeline:

Connor is like an alarm clock...he always watches Curious George from 8 to 8:30, has breakfast, either while he is doing that or after, with me. He gets dressed, gets jobs done. Same here, I put a load of laundry. Then we'll start. Forty five minutes of math, Language is some independent reading, some writing...cursive, now he's doing cursive writing, some dictation. Some writing letters some, he's starting to do some essays...and then history...we're going way back because I want him to know about evolution.

This is approximately the same schedule used throughout the week. According to Madeline she and Connor "do four solid hours a day, maybe five on some days" but do not do anything on Saturdays and Sundays. Therefore, on a daily and weekly basis, the structure resembled that of formal schooling. When asked if she did any teaching during the summer, Madeline said:

You know what, we haven't. But we will this year. It won't be the same. But I noticed, for instance, he lost some math skills over the summer. And reading I wouldn't worry about because he's such a voracious reader. So I think we'll do a little bit. And he may do some Spanish this summer. There's always reading. And I might, I don't remember, but I might give him some suggested books to read this summer. With the math I will, but I want him to have some unstructured time or some time when he determines what he wants to do. That's where his individual interests can blossom.

When talking about the summer Donald stated that "there was a conscious break from schooling. Connor is a naturally inquisitive child so he didn't stop learning he just stopped being homeschooled for a couple of months." This quote revealed another way in which this homeschooling structure resembled formal schooling because it described two types of learning: One that took place during the explicit teaching context of schooling, in this case homeschooling. The other occurred naturally, outside of an explicit teaching context, due to the inquisitiveness of Connor. However, despite acknowledging this distinction, each parent appeared to want to avoid creating it. Madeline stated that the fact that Connor continued to learn outside of an explicit teaching time frame is "an important point" and added that "with homeschooling is that



there isn't this great divide between home and learning. And so then there isn't this great division between book learning and real-world learning." Therefore, on one hand, there was a distinction made between the definite daily, weekly, and yearly schedule and the exploration of Connor's natural curiosity. On the other hand, they wished to blur the distinction between "book learning" and "real-world learning".

When asked about the location at which most of the homeschooling took place Madeline replied "different families do it differently...Maybe because I've been a teacher we do most of it, probably 75% at this table." In addition to this, Connor had a desk that he sat at for some reading and writing assignments. Madeline was initially reluctant about using the desk. "Another family offered it to us to see if he'd like it and I thought no, but he loves it. It's kind of his space. And it's more comfortable writing that way." The literacy practice of writing required, or at least is made easier by, a hard, flat surface such as a desk.

As mentioned above, this family utilized out-of-the-home resources such as libraries and museums. According to Madeline, "whatever we're doing we go to the library and get books. Occasionally...we'll go to the museum and see what they got there...And we spend a lot of time at the science center...every other, maybe every three weeks." The family also utilized enrichment classes that are organized by the PALS group. In addition to all of this, there is "soccer, play group on Thursdays and Monday gym class and Tuesday we go swimming with friends. [And] piano lessons once a week."

The use of library books revealed a distinction between reading-as-part-of-homeschooling and other kinds of reading. When she talked about some of the reading activities that occur during the day Madeline said that "sometimes we'll sit and read

here or, um, you know, the first thing in the morning we'll sit and read together... Sometimes he'll wake up and sit in bed before we do anything." When asked if this reading is considered to be part of homeschooling, Madeline responded "it's part of homeschool, but it's not, I mean it's not something that we have on plan. It just happens, but it happens enough." This statement revealed a separation between what "just happens" and what is "planned" and what is planned is considered homeschooling.

The process by which Connor was evaluated resembles the process of formal schooling. When talking about mathematics, Madeline reported that Connor has "a test or a quiz every other week, if not every week." When talking about other classes she reported that:

In History or Geography we haven't done it as much, but when we finish a chunk and a chunk might be finishing Ancient Egypt. Science, we have had some science tests. It could be when we finish a topic or a chunk of a book. And the tests will usually be...I try to have different formats so there will be some um straight question and answer, there will be some fill in the blank, some matching, that sort of thing. Or a test could be something much different.

Figure 4.1 is an example of the kind of test that Connor took. This test has the heading "Final Day of HS-ing", which is noteworthy in that it reinforced the point made earlier, concerning the temporal boundaries of homeschooling being similar to the temporal boundaries found in formal schooling. However, Madeline described evaluations that are different "than the traditional sit-down" type, and "could be something more fun like a game...I could be like pretend you're so and so and tell me about or recite a poem."

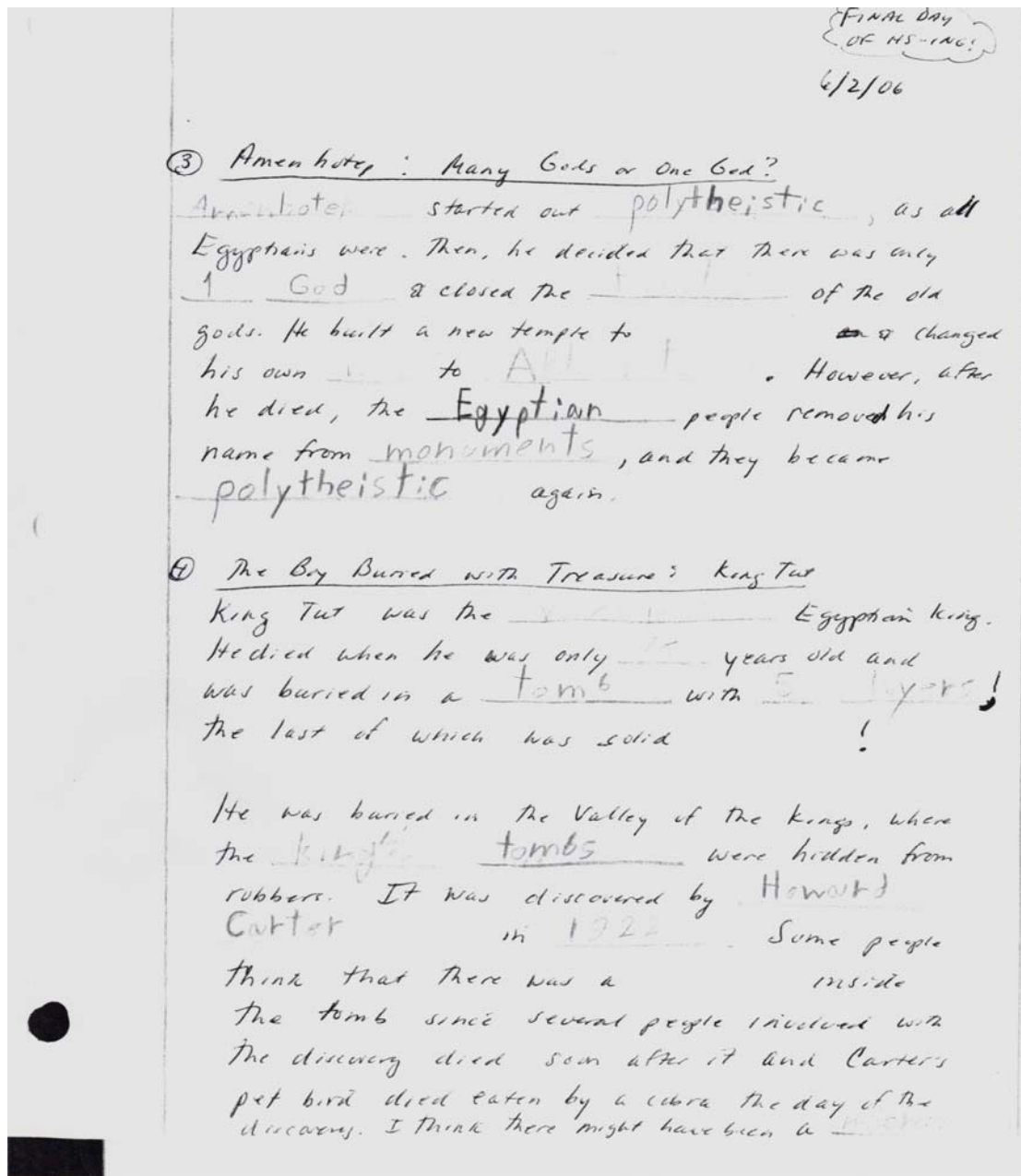


Figure 4.1: Homeschooling Test

Although the formal education and informal education are often presented as opposites, Greenfield and Lave observed that “educational formality is more a continuum than a pair of opposites. In addition, all societies in the world provide several different types of education to their members, and these types differ in how formal they are” (p. 182). The above description of this homeschooling family appeared to confirm

the notion that the formal/informal distinction is more of a continuum. In this family homeschooling took place at designated times and it utilized temporal concepts usually associated with formal schooling (e.g., Monday to Friday schedule, no school during the summer). An explicit curriculum was used, and it was supplemented by library books and other outside sources. Although the teacher was a close relative, in this case a parent, she set the schedule and took the lead during the lesson. Below we will examine the literacy practices involved in the daily events of homeschooling.

#### 4.3 Literacy Practices

Donald and Madeline made it clear that, from birth, Connor was exposed to books. According to Donald, “we read to him all the time” to which Madeline added “since infancy.” Very early on the library was considered a “focal point” for the family. According to Madeline, after Connor was born she started a meeting group at the library for mothers of young infants. “We went to the library frequently...we were at the library twice a week, I’d guess...and being an only child I read to him a lot.” Madeline acknowledged that books and other reading materials were “kind of everywhere” and described Donald as “a voracious, voracious reader. He’s always, you always have a book with you.” She described the house as “a reading household with relatively little, little TV.”

Within this context Connor evolved into a reader. Donald said that “I don’t know when he started to read, but once he started it took off.” Madeline described the moment when Connor began to read, even if she did not recall any formal instruction.

There was a moment, I had a book of mine sitting around and there was a moment where he saw a word on the page and he said what it was. So that was a big

moment...I remember it happening. There are things like that. He was being read to all the time and we would make up stories and tell him stories. He was immersed in language and it just everything just came to when he was ready it was a very, there wasn't anything that was difficult about it I would say.

She admitted that "I didn't really know how to do this [teach Connor to read] 'cause it was kindergarten. It is all winging it, winging it with structure." She also described explicit phonics instruction as "something that happened for a day and didn't go anywhere...he has had little training and he can read anything. So he's figured out." Connor could read when he was four-years old even though "we didn't push at all."

When asked about what changed about the reading activities since she has implemented an explicit teaching structure, Madeline explained that

There was a big change that occurred maybe, let me think, when simultaneous to my picking out books he started picking out his own books. Now we have this two-tiered approach. And um, he always, he has this stuff he picks out, generally comic books. And the stuff I bring in, related to what we're covering or something like short-wave radio book that is relevant because of something he's interested [in].

The two-tiered approach included "the main tier, which is the homeschooled tier" in which "the choices were kind of dictated or at least suggested by the curriculum", a subject search, or a librarian's recommendation. This approach is

more guided rather than just going to the library and saying, hmm, I wonder what else this author has done. Or, um, pre-kindergarten, or pre-homeschool, it was more favorite authors, so let's read all of Shirley Hughes. Let's read all of various authors. It wasn't dictated by the subject. Suddenly when homeschooling started the subject that we wanted to cover was part of it.

The second tier was established approximately one year ago "when Connor began "choosing books for himself." The family kept a reading list that included both "tiers" of books, and included the name of the book, the author, and Connor's opinion of the

| <u>Title</u>   | <u>Author</u>         | <u>Opinion<br/>(+/-/w)</u> |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Bionics  | J. J. Cohen           | +                          |
| The 4 Play 45 min<br>Music Extension                             | Cruice (video)        | mm                         |
| The Leg. of the P. C.  | T.D. & C.E.           | +                          |
| Cleuds   | Jenny Mamer           | mm                         |
| The Flying Horse...  | Jane B.M.             | -                          |
| N. Drew: Mystery<br>and the Penn                                 | Cyn Keene             | ++                         |
| The Greek News   | A. Powell & P. Steele | ++                         |
| D.R.M.: if you can read music, thank G.A. - S. Bath + A. Marucci | Guthrie & Brown       | -                          |
| Hey There, Stink Bug!  | L. Bulion             | +                          |
| The World of Ancient Greece: Everyday Life                       | Robert Hull           | ✗                          |
| The House on The Cliff   | F.W. Dixon            | mm                         |
| Trixie belden #7<br>The mysterious code                          | Kathryn Kenny         | -                          |
| Henri Louis & Me   | Bob Rucke             | +                          |

Figure 4.2: Library/Reading List

book [Figure 4.2]. According to Donald, “the list includes reading for pleasure, reading books spawned by homeschooling, and other reading. It’s a little of everything.”

Although the reading selections were based on pleasure, homeschooling, and other purposes, there can be a connection between them. Madeline reported that “things feed

off each other” and Connor may read something for pleasure and the subject can be incorporated into the homeschooling curriculum or he may read something as part of the curriculum and find books that he then reads for pleasure. Here is an area where the distinction between “book learning” and “real-world learning” is blurred. It also indicated that Connor has input regarding in the books used in homeschooling.

When asked how homeschooling has changed as Connor’s reading has increased, Madeline said “probably, the volume. If you look at the kind of books that he was reading last year, a lot of them are, you know, maybe fifteen page books and a lot more picture books...And then we just got done reading the Iliad and the Odyssey. It’s, um, longer more difficult reading, more advanced subjects.” Madeline also described how Connor has changed since he had started reading more: “Well since he can read more, more independently now, there’s sort of...there’s that. He’s more independent.”

According to Madeline;

Most of them [books] he reads by himself. The other ones that are more sort of subject-oriented, probably, maybe a third of them we read together, a third of them I scan or read and then he reads. We both read in whatever order. And then a third he just reads by himself and tells me about them...And I may ask him to tell me about it, I may ask him to write about it. I might ask him to write a summary or I’ll scan it and ask him some questions.

Here, Madeline mentioned the process of writing as a way in which Connor communicated with her about the things that he read. Interestingly, Madeline’s description of how Connor learned to write was similar to her description of how Connor learned to read: He was always surrounded by letters and there was little formal instruction. According to Madeline

as forming the letters...How’d he do it? I don’t remember. I think part of it might have been...I’m under the impression it just happened, but I mean there was clearly stuff before it just happened, but I don’t remember...we must have had a

book or something. I don't think I would have started without a...I'm structured enough to want something. I remember when he was a little, little baby we had a play pen and every night we would put some new toys in it and one of them were alphabet blocks. So he was exposed to letters early on. And his favorite toy for a long time was a V. A blue V. Do you remember that? So he was exposed to letters. And I think I probably, well I don't remember sitting down and saying 'what's this?'

Within this family reading and writing is something that just happened. However learning cursive was something that was now being taught explicitly during home-schooling. According to Madeline "we have a book now that deals with cursive and so little by little, he's learning a letter a day. He's done all the lower case and he's doing the upper case now."

In addition to these descriptions provided by the parents, analysis of the transcripts and journals revealed the other skills involved in the literacy practices of this family. These skills include using literacy to understand ratios in a math lesson, categorizing objects, analyzing and synthesizing elements, abstracting to write a summary, and self-reflection.

The first practice presented here occurred during a math lesson. Madeline had given Connor four different amounts of money and asked him to add it. After writing down the amounts, but before he began to add them, this exchange occurred:

118       MADELINE: Okay, good job. Can you please write down all  
119       those, all those, all the amount of money, and add them all  
120       together?  
121       CONNOR: Sure. That's 17.25 (19) Did you know that one  
122       thousand pennies would be ten dollars?

Connor was asked to add the amounts, but after he wrote them down he spontaneously asked his mother about the number of pennies in ten dollars. This demonstrated a



knowledge of money, including knowledge of the units of money (pennies, dollars), the value of the units, and the relationship between them.

- 123      MADELINE: Really?  
124      CONNOR: Yeah. Because a hundred pennies equals one dollar.  
125      MADELINE: Yeah  
126      CONNOR: And ten times one hundred equals one thousand.

Connor had not completed the task that she asked him (lines 118 and 119), and Madeline refocused him to that task. Connor heard his mother's "really?" as a possible challenge because, in addition to confirming his statement ("yeah"), he began his next statement with "because" which implied that he is confirming that his previous statement is true for the reason that "a hundred pennies equals one dollar." Connor discussed the relationship, a ratio, between 1000 pennies and 10 dollars and 100 pennies and 1 dollar. Madeline (line 125) affirmed his statement about this relationship and Connor (line 126) continued with his explanation of the relationship between the two.

- 127      MADELINE: How many pennies for a hundred dollars?  
128      CONNOR: Hmm (7) How many pennies for a hundred dollars?  
129      MADELINE: Mmm hmm.  
130      CONNOR: (5) Ten thousand. Either ten thousand or a hundred  
131      thousand. No, ten thousand.

Madeline then initiated an exchange (line 127) and asked Connor about the amount of pennies in one hundred dollars. She elaborated on Connor's statements about the relationship between 1000 and 100 and 100 and 1 by asking a question about a similar relationship. Connor paused, repeated the question and then offered two different answers.

- 132      MADELINE: Can I show you something=  
133      CONNOR: =A thousand pennies is ten dollars, so ten thousand 134  
pennies would be a hundred, would be a hundred dollars.  
135      MADELINE: I have to write it down to make sure I got it right.  
136      You want to work with me? One dollar, one dollar is (4) How

137        many pennies in a dollar?

Connor did not correctly respond to Madeline's initiation at line 127 so she asked to show him a way to answer correctly. As she asked this Connor repeats his initial statement at line 122, using it as the basis to reply correctly to Madeline's initiation at line 127. However, Madeline did not evaluate that response at her turn and, instead announced that she has to write something down. She asked Connor if he wanted to work with her, and then immediately wrote "1" and asked Connor how many pennies were in a dollar. Here, Madeline introduced writing as a tool that organized her thoughts in order to "make sure" she got "it right."

138        CONNOR: One hundred.

139        MADELINE: How many pennies in ten dollars, you add one zero  
140        here and you add one more =

141        CONNOR: =A thousand.

142        MADELINE: You want to do the next one?

143        CONNOR: How many pennies in a hundred dollars? (12) Ten  
144        thousand.

Connor responded correctly to Madeline's initiation at lines 136-137. Then, as she wrote a 0 next to the 1, she began to ask Connor about the next step in the process. Connor correctly responded to his mother's question about the amount of pennies in ten dollars (line 141). Madeline then asked Connor to do "the next one" and Connor replied correctly utilizing the written tool provided by his mother.

145        MADELINE: What about, what would be the next one.

146        CONNOR: A thousand dollars?

147        MADELINE: Mmm hmm.

148        CONNOR: It would be a hundred thousand pennies.

149        MADELINE: Okay good. (5)

Madeline then asked Connor to perform the next step of the progression and, with the tool, he responded correctly, stating that a hundred thousand pennies is equal to a

thousand dollars. Madeline evaluated this response with “okay, good.” This spontaneous lesson occurred in the context of a longer lesson about counting money. During this lesson Connor spontaneously demonstrated knowledge about the ratios of 1000/10 and 100/1. When asked by his mother to utilize that knowledge, he had problems applying that to the ratio 10000/100. His mother introduced writing as a means to organize his thinking and he was able to answer questions about the ratio 10000/100 and 100000/1000. This lesson demonstrated knowledge of monetary units, their constant value, and a comparison of the quantities relative to one another. The written text was introduced as a means to help Connor solve the problem.

Another way in which writing was used as a tool of organization can be seen in an analysis of several of Connor’s writing samples [Figure 4.3]. In the sample below, dated

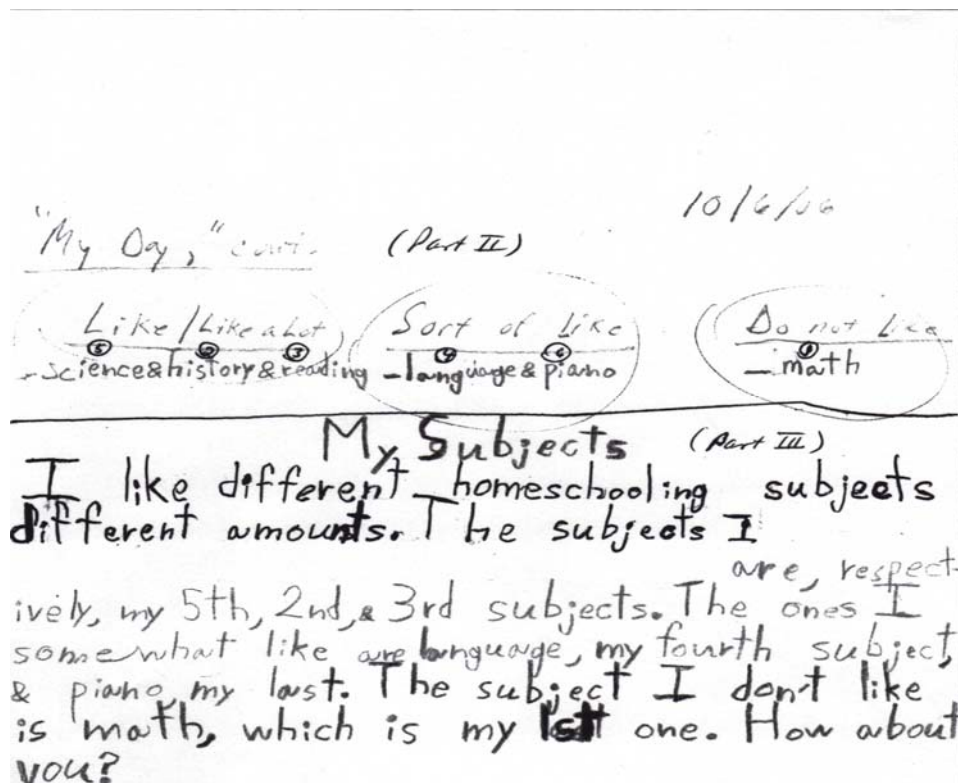


Figure 4.3: Summary of Homeschooling Subjects

October 6, 2006, Connor created a short summary of his homeschooled subjects and he grouped them according to how much he liked them. The second line contained, in his mother's writing, the phrases "like/like a lot", "sort of like", and "do not like". The category names are circled and, within the circles, Connor wrote the names of his classes. Above each of the class names were numbers, which indicated the sequence in which the classes occurred during the day. His mother wrote the names of categories in which the classes were to be organized. Here literacy was utilized as a tool to analyze the elements of the day and then synthesize those elements into a unique configuration: how much he liked the classes. Connor analyzed his day, organized the elements into new categories, and synthesized them into a summary.

This activity is reminiscent of how Vygotsky (1978) described the use of speech by children:

By means of words children single out separate elements, thereby overcoming the natural structure of the sensory field and forming new (artificially introduced and dynamic) structural centers. The child begins to perceive the world not only through his eyes but also through his speech. As a result, the immediacy of "natural perception" is supplanted by a complex mediated process. Later, the intellectual mechanisms related to speech acquire a new function; verbalized perception in the child is no longer limited to labeling. At this next stage of development, speech acquires a synthesizing function, which in turn is instrumental in achieving more complex forms of cognitive perception (p. 32).

In the example above Connor used written words to break up elements of his daily homeschooling experience. With the help of his mother he was able to organize the elements according to a shared similarity. He then synthesized these written elements into a new configuration. Connor is using written words to master his own behavior.

"The system of signs restructures the whole psychological process and enables the child to master her movement...Movement detaches itself from direct perception and comes

under the control of sign functions included in the choice response” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 35). On any particular day Connor’s perceptual experience of his day is based on the order in which the classes occur. However, by writing the subjects down and manipulating them in categories he is able to detach himself from the perceptual order in which the classes occurred. This allows Connor to reorganize his day, on paper, into a new arrangement. This is a collaborative process, as his mother provided the written categories and the space for Connor to organize the subjects.

Connor analyzed and synthesized elements of his perceptual experience on his own in one of his journal entries approximately three months later [Figure 4.4].

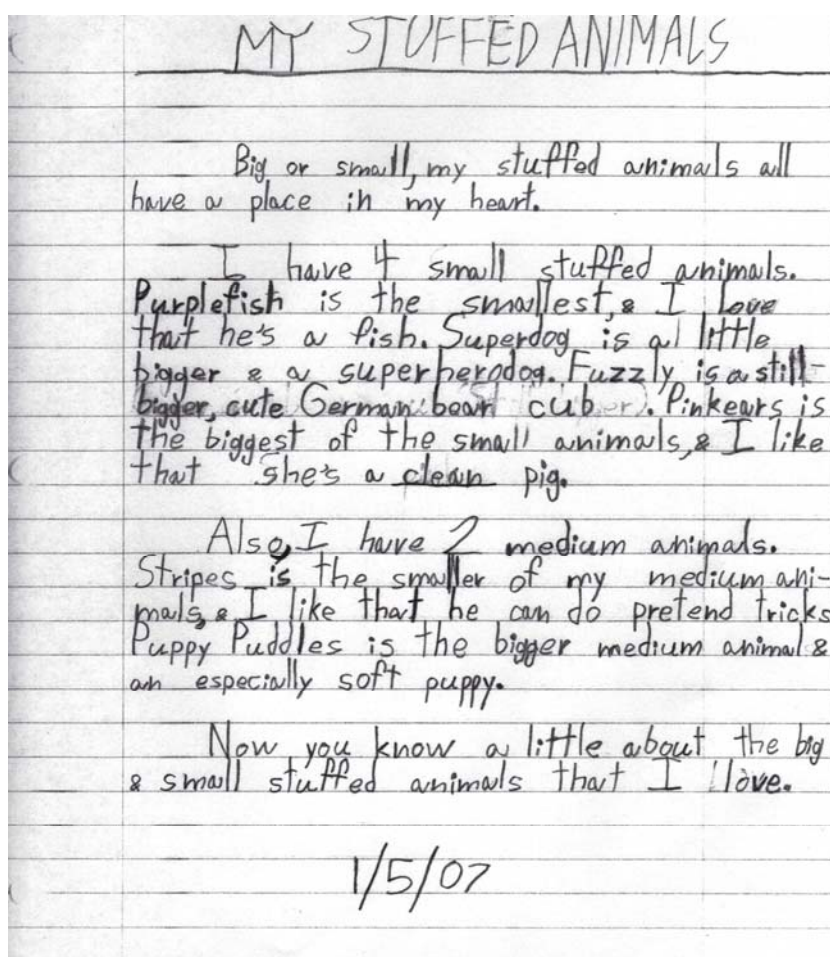


Figure 4.4: My Stuffed Animals

Here Connor wrote a longer story entitled “My Stuffed Animals” in which he grouped his stuffed animals according to their size. That Connor did this on his own supports Vygotsky’s observation that “an interpersonal process is transformed into an intrapersonal one...this applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts” (1978, p. 57). Figure 4.3 represented a collaborative practice that occurred between Connor and his mother. Figure 4.4 represented a practice that Connor completed by himself. This supports Madeline’s description that literacy had made Connor more independent.

In addition to these activities, Madeline used literacy as an organizational tool during the practice of Connor writing a thank-you letter to a relative. Madeline instructed Connor to write out everything that was going on in his life. Connor complied and, after this, Madeline numbered his sentences [Figure 4.5] as a means of indicating the order in which they would appear in the final letter, where the elements were reorganized into a coherent structure [Figure 4.6]. She also added elements of a letter to his list: the opening “Dear” (marked as line 1) and the closing “love to you” (marked as line 10), lending her knowledge of letter writing to the practice. This activity, too, required using literacy as a tool to analyze the elements of Connor’s perceptual experience. The new synthesis took the form of the letter [Figure 4.6].

part (3) Here's what's going on with me:

- (4) Chicago on 5/16-19/07!
- (5) <sup>I'm expecting instructions in</sup> planes + ~~space~~ <sup>space</sup> ~~time~~ <sup>time</sup> ~~6~~ <sup>6</sup> days
- ~~vehicles~~ <sup>vehicles</sup> ~~space~~ <sup>space</sup> ~~time~~ <sup>time</sup> ~~6~~ <sup>6</sup>
- (6) Lego vehicles. I hope we go to the museum
- (8) Hilarious piano performance.
- (7) still crazy about drawing.
- (9) Goalie for soccer.
- (10) Love to you...
- (2) How doing in ~~NY~~ NY?
- (1) <sup>Dear</sup> Thanks for card + \$10!  
Thanks

Figure 4.5: Organization of Elements of a Letter

4/24/07

Dear

Thanks very much for the \$10! How are U in Arizona??

Here's what's going on with me. I'll be in Chicago the 17-19! I'm extremely interested in airplanes & spacetime, so I hope we go to the space museum.

I have 6 Lego vehicles. I'm still crazy about drawing, & I'm doing a hilarious piano performance of "Toccata and Fugue" by "Catinthehatsky" (Toccata by Kabalensky). In March, I was good at playing goalie in soccer.

Love to you,

Figure 4.6: Synthesis of elements into letter.



Another way in which the Connor and Madeline collaborated in a literacy practice can be seen in a selection from a reading lesson. During this lesson Madeline read the following story:

The three billy goats gruff. Once upon a time three billy goats lived on a hillside. They were little billy goat gruff, middle-sized billy goat gruff and great big billy goat gruff. The three billy goats grazed on their hillside until all the fresh grass was gone. They decided to cross the stream at the bottom of the hill, and go over into the meadow on the other side. There was plenty of fresh grass in the meadow, but to cross the stream they had to go over a rickety, rickety bridge. Under the rickety, rickety bridge lived a huge, ugly, mean, and selfish troll. The littlest billy goat gruff was the first bridge. Trip trap, trip trap went the little billy goat over the bridge. "Who's that trip trapping over my bridge" growled the huge, ugly, mean, and selfish troll. "It is I, the little billy goat gruff" said the little goat in a little voice. "I am going to eat you up" said the troll. "I'm so little" said the little billy goat gruff. "I'd hardly be a mouthful for you. Wait 'til my big brother, he's much fatter than I." "Be gone, then" snarled the huge, ugly, mean, and selfish troll. The next day the middle-sized billy goat gruff started over the meadow. Trip trap, trip trap went the middle-sized billy goat gruff across the bridge. "Who's that trip trapping over my bridge" roared the troll. "It is I, middle-sized billy goat gruff" said the middle-sized goat in a middle-sized voice. "I am going to eat you up" said the huge, ugly, mean, and selfish troll. "Don't eat me" pleaded the middle-sized billy goat. "Wait for my brother, he's much fatter than I." "Uh, be gone then" growled the troll. The next day great big billy goat gruff started across the bridge to join his brothers in the meadow. Trip-trap, trip trap went the great big billy goat gruff across the rickety-rickety bridge. "Who's that trip trapping over my bridge" growled the huge, ugly, mean, and selfish troll. "It is I, the great big billy goat gruff" said great big billy goat gruff in his great, big, billy goat, billy goat voice. "I am going to eat you up." The huge, ugly, mean, and selfish troll. And he climbed onto the rickety rickety bridge. "Come on then" said the great big billy goat gruff. The great big billy goat gruff ran right at the huge, ugly, mean, and selfish troll and tossed him into the air with his great big billy goat horns. He tossed the troll so far up the river that the troll never found his way back down. Now every morning the three billy goats gruff trip trap across the rickety-rickety bridge to eat the sweet grass or wallow in the fresh meadow. At night they trip-trap across the rickety-rickety bridge to sleep peacefully on their hillside.

After completing the story, Madeline initiated the following exchange:

- MADELINE:  
97     Alright I'd like you to tell me, what can you tell me about  
98     this story? If you were to summarize it, what would you say?  
99     CONNOR: I would say (4) I don't know. I don't know, mom. (8)  
100    MADELINE: Remember when we did summaries last week, want  
101    to use that, that tool.  
102    CONNOR: The who, what, when, where, why, how?  
103    MADELINE: Mmm hmm.  
104    CONNOR: Uh, okay. Who. The three billy goats gruff.

Connor did not give the preferred response to Madeline's request and she prompted him with a "tool" that he can use for summaries. Connor recalled the "who, what, when, where, why, and how" tool and began the summary at line 104. The use of this tool is another way in which literacy was used as a tool to aid in abstract thinking. A summary abstracts, from a longer text, the main points of the story.

- 105    MADELINE: Can you make it into a whole sentence, like this is a  
106    story about blah, blah, blah=  
107    CONNOR: =This is a story about the three billy goats gruff=  
108    MADELINE: =Okay=  
109    CONNOR: Who? (16) I don't know.  
110    MADELINE: This is a story about the three billy goats gruff who?  
111    CONNOR: Who what?  
112    MADELINE: You tell me.  
113    CONNOR: I don't know.  
114    MADELINE: Okay, well where, where were they? You got the  
115    who, what about the where?  
116    CONNOR: Rickety rickety bridge.  
117    MADELINE: Okay, can you make that, this is a story about the  
118    three billy goats gruff who, what=  
119    CONNOR: =oh=  
120    MADELINE: =about the rickety rickety bridge?  
121    CONNOR: Who (7) sought fresh grass on the other side of a  
122    rickety-rickety bridge.  
123    MADELINE: Mmm hmm.  
124    CONNOR: Over a stream.  
125    MADELINE: Mmm hmm.  
126    CONNOR: But a troll was under the bridge.  
127    MADELINE: (3) Good. (6) That's great. Okay.

A comparison of how Connor responded at 109 (Who? (16) I don't know.), 111 (Who what?), and 113 (I don't know.), with his responses, at his mother's prompting, at 116 (Rickety rickety bridge), 121 (Who (7) sought fresh grass on the other side of a rickety-rickety bridge), 124 (Over a stream), 126 (But a troll was under the bridge) revealed how the use of the tool transformed him from a novice summarizer to a more experienced summarizer. The tool used in their exchanges was the means by which they constructed their summary, and Madeline evaluated Connor as he completed the sentence. They continued to use that tool until they completed their summary, and Madeline closed the first part of this with an evaluation of "Okay. This is fine."

After working through the summary, Madeline instructed Connor that they were going to write out their summary. This, like several examples above, was a collaborative effort. According to Madeline "You, my friend will write the first sentence and then you'll dictate the second one to me and I will write it. Okay?" Connor demonstrated several other skills during this literacy practice. While Madeline dictated the summary, Connor demonstrated spelling skills.

193      MADELINE: Who sought fresh grass on the other side of a  
 194      rickety-rickety bridge.  
 195      CONNOR: Who saw fresh grass?  
 196      MADELINE: Uh, it's the verb seek, you know what seek means,  
 197      right?  
 198      CONNOR: I know how to spell sought.  
 199      MADELINE: Okay.  
 200      CONNOR: It's like thought, but instead of a th, it's an s.  
 201      MADELINE: Right.

Connor heard Madeline's "sought" as "saw". Rather than repeating the word, she attempted to repair by using the present tense of sought: Seek. Connor compared thought and sought, which required him to know the similarities and differences

between words and the ability to separate what is different from them. Later, he performed something similar when presented with the word rickety-rackety:

- 217 CONNOR: (35) How do you spell rickety?  
218 MADELINE: How would you guess?  
219 CONNOR: (3) Um, r, i, c, k, e, t, y.  
220 MADELINE: Good. Rickety-rackety.  
221 CONNOR: Rickety make into rackety?  
222 MADELINE: Yeah. (29)

Connor compared the words by noting their similarities, isolating their differences and correctly spelling a word. This skill was previously developed in a collaborative way with his mother. Figure 4.7 presents an exercise that Connor and his mother had

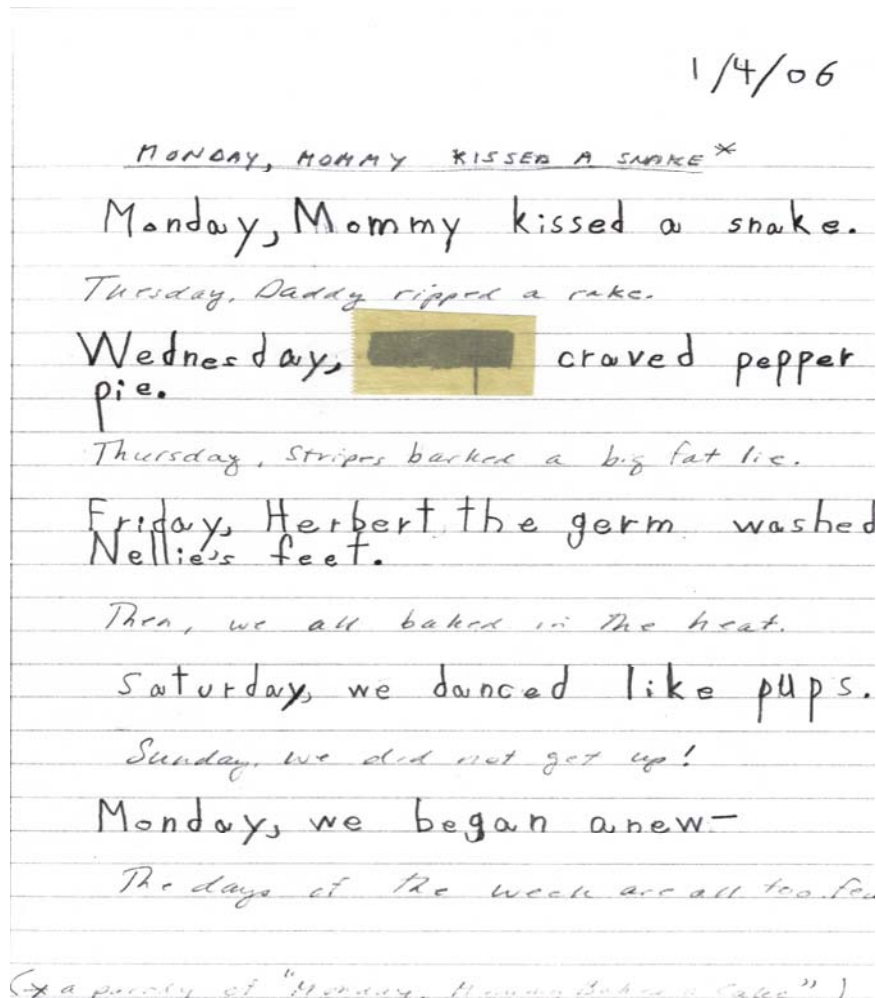


Figure 4.7: Rhyming words

completed on January 6, 2006. Here Connor wrote a sentence and his mother wrote a sentence under it, with the last word rhyming with the last word from Connor's sentence (snake-rake, pie-lie, feet-heat, pups-up, and anew-few). The skills modeled in this exercise are similar to the ones used by Connor in the summary practice described above (sought-thought). Figure 4.8 presents another writing sample, dated October 30,

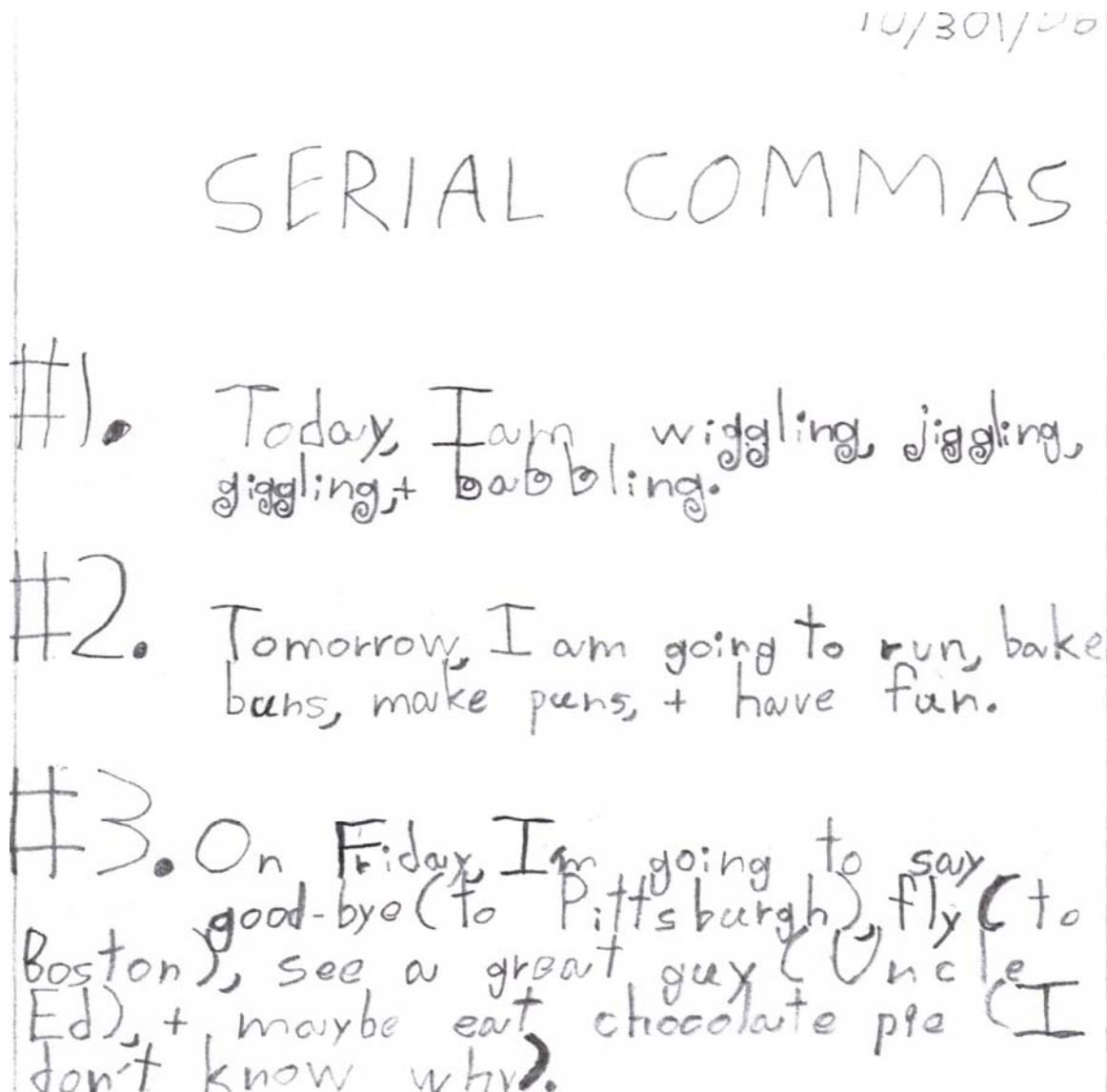


Figure 4.8: Serial Commas, With Rhyming Words at #1

2006, where Connor produced sentences that also demonstrated this skill. Although the exercise about the use of commas, Connor's first sentence is "Today I am wiggling, jiggling, giggling, and babbling." The relationship between wiggling, jiggling, and giggling is similar to the relationship between the words thought and sought.

Returning to the summary, Connor finished writing his sentence and he and his mother switched roles, as Connor dictating the last sentence of the summary to his mother, producing this artifact [Figure 4.9]:

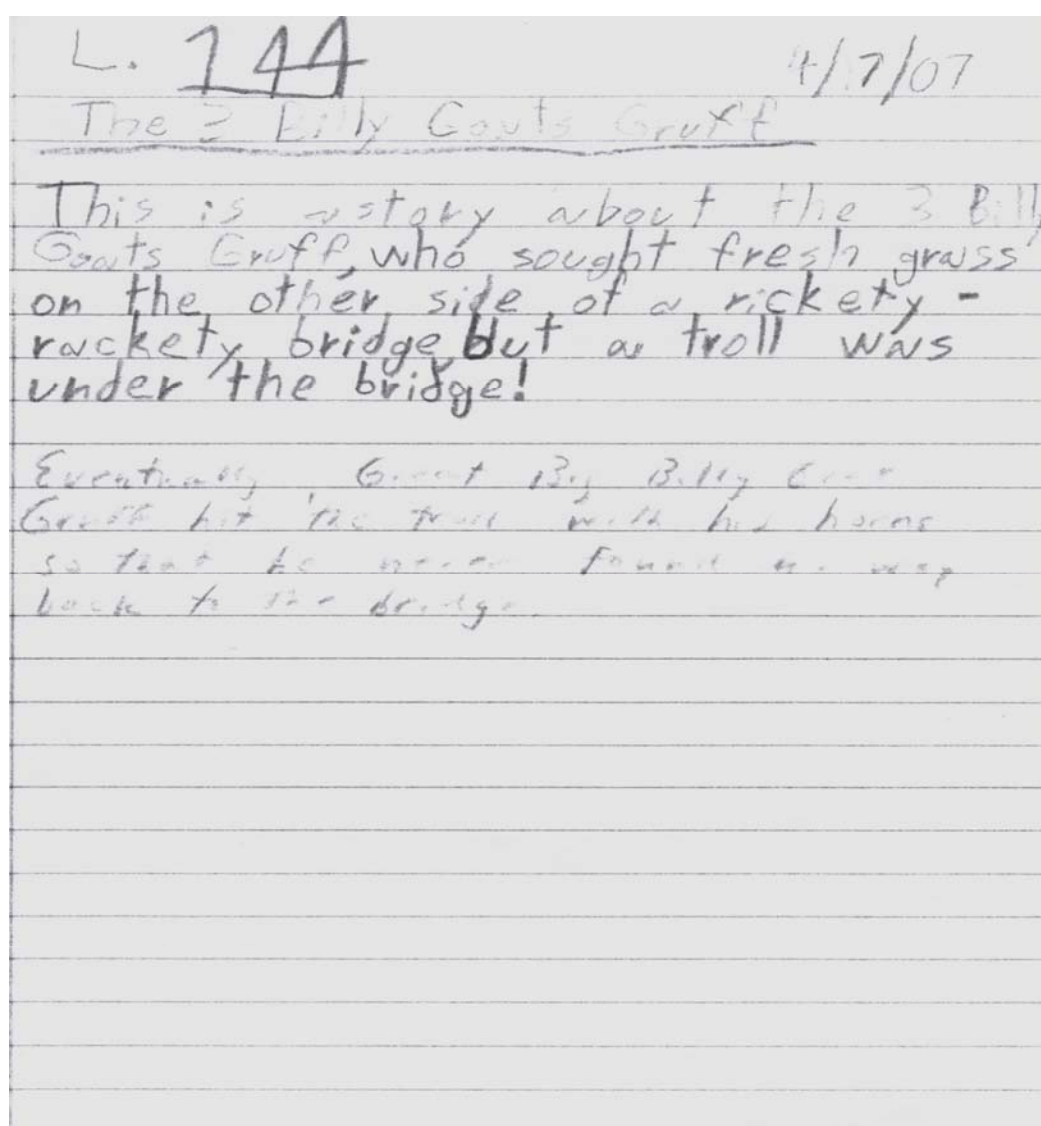


Figure 4.9: Billy Goats Gruff Summary.

The practice of writing this summary required skills such as abstraction, both in the spelling exercise, as Connor was able to abstract the similar parts of words (e.g., the ought in sought and thought being similar), and in the writing exercise, where he summarized a 32-sentence story in two sentences. The skills with the individual words were facilitated by prior experience with the relationship between similar sounding words. The summary of the story was facilitated by the “who, what, when, where, why, how” tool provided by his mother. These literacy practices revealed several elements of literacy that are integrated in a more informal education practice.

Learning cursive is another literacy practice that Connor and his mother engaged in. This practice contained both a verbal description and physical demonstration of how to form the letters. From a handwriting lesson from April 17, 2007:

8       MADELINE: Why don't you grab one of those and we'll take a  
 9       look at this. (4) Okay, okay, want to take a look at the description?  
 10       Do it with our fingers. Undercurve loop, curve down and up,  
 11       retrace, curve right. Ready, on more time. Undercurve loop=  
 12       CONNOR: =curve down and up=  
 13       MADELINE: =curve down and up, retrace, curve right. Okay,  
 14       good. So let's see, this one comes over here, but doesn't quite  
 15       touch that one. And that's about half way between the midline and  
 16       the baseline. What's wrong with this one bud?

And from a lesson on May 1, 2007:

11       MADELINE: Good. Can you sh do it in the air with me? (3)  
 12       Double, let's say them together.  
 13       CONNOR/MADELINE (together): Double curve loop  
 14       CONNOR: Curve  
 15       MADELINE: Down  
 16       CONNOR: And up=  
 17       MADELINE: =Up. Curve=  
 18       CONNOR: =Curve=  
 19       MADELINE: =Right  
 20       CONNOR: =Loop. Curve  
 21       MADELINE: Right  
 22       CONNOR: Right

23       MADELINE: Right, yeah, one more time. (4) Double curve, so  
 24       down one, two. Ready?  
 25       CONNOR: Okay.  
 26       MADELINE: Say it with me.  
 27       CONNOR: =Double curve loop curve down and up. Loop, curve  
 28       right.=  
 29       MADELINE: = Double curve loop curve down and up. Loop,  
 30       curve right.

In addition to these instructions, Connor also judged his writing. This self-reflection was facilitated greatly by the fact that the items are on paper. Although one can reflect on something one says, writing down his speech allowed Connor to have the items to be judged in front of him, as something that could be seen, measured, and compared to other letters. This was facilitated by writing. The following was the talk centered around the production of the letter S:

16       MADELINE: What's wrong with this one bud?  
 17       CONNOR: (2) Hmm (3) I don't know. The loop is too small.  
 18       MADELINE: The loop is too small, mmm hmm.  
 19       CONNOR: The undercurve is too, is a little bit not slanted, but  
 20       MADELINE: =Okay, and um=  
 21       CONNOR: =And the stroke isn't supposed to cross, like it should  
 22       on a G..  
 23       MADELINE: Good, excellent.

And later,

32       MADELINE: How about this one, what's wrong here?  
 33       CONNOR: (4) That?  
 34       MADELINE: Uh-hu.  
 35       CONNOR: The loop is too big.  
 36       MADELINE: The loop is too big.  
 37       CONNOR: So is the check stroke.  
 38       MADELINE: So is the check stroke, good. How about this last  
 39       one?  
 40       CONNOR: (3) This (2) oooh, this is too big and the check is too  
 41       low.

And from a lesson on May 1, 2007, while discussing the production of the letter D:



56       MADELINE: (4) I'll just give you a hint, okay. Do you know  
 57       what's wrong with these one's bub? I'll let you be the writing  
 58       analyst. What's wrong with this one?  
 59       CONNOR: It doesn't go below the baseline.  
 60       MADELINE: Mmm hmm. What else is wrong? (4) And it doesn't  
 61       float above it either.  
 62       CONNOR: It doesn't, yeah and it goes like down and up.  
 63       MADELINE: Mmm hmm.  
 64       CONNOR: Not  
 65       MADELINE: Okay, what about this one?  
 66       CONNOR: It should be connected and curved.  
 67       MADELINE: Uh hu.  
 68       CONNOR: Like, currrrvved.  
 69       MADELINE: Uh hu, and this one?  
 70       CONNOR: This one, this one should be small.  
 71       MADELINE: And it should land, it should finish up and back=  
 72       CONNOR: It should finish up but the uh  
 73       MADELINE: (3) top line.  
 74       CONNOR: Yeah, top line. No, head line.  
 75       MADELINE: Head line. Okay, and what about this one?  
 76       CONNOR: There needs to be a loop and not a straight line.

Madeline referred to Connor as a "the writing analyst" giving him the opportunity to judge the lines, loops, and curves that form the letters. The marks on paper provide Connor with something concrete on which to reflect. Since he is the one who produced the marks, he is reflecting on something that he produced. That is, he is reflecting on himself.

The analysis of literacy practices revealed several skills being utilized within the literacy practices. Specifically, literacy was used to solve problems about mathematical ratios, categorize objects, analyze and synthesize elements of the day, abstract and summarize elements of a story, and for self-reflection.

#### 4.4 Homeschooling Consequences

As mentioned before, it has been assumed that literacy (Greenfield and Bruner, 1969; Postman, 1994) and formal schooling (Dreeben, 1968) are both integral in producing autonomy and independence. By removing children from the home environment, where they have developed a relationship of dependency with their parents, schools also aid in the development of autonomy and independence. Due to the larger number of children in a given classroom, a student's likelihood of establishing a meaningful relationship with an adult (the teacher) decreases (Dreeben, 1968). With the use of tests, which are taken individually, and the prohibition against cheating, students are taught, to a great extent, to be self-reliant and work separately and independently from the other students in the classroom (Dreeben, 1968; Koff & Warren, 1971). And, in separating thought from what is thought about, literacy also aids in separating the thinker from what is thought about (Ong, 1982) and promotes abstract thinking (Greenfield, 1972). This separation creates an individual who stands apart from the world.

When asked during the interview about how homeschooling has changed since Connor began to read, Madeline discussed Connor's developing autonomy and independence. Madeline explained that "there was a big change that occurred maybe, let me think, when simultaneous to my picking out books he started picking out his own books. Now we have this two-tiered approach." This second tier, as mentioned above, was established approximately one year ago "when Connor began choosing books for himself." Madeline also described how Connor has changed since he has started reading more: "Well since he can read more, more independently now, there's sort of...there's that. He's more independent" and "most of them [books] he reads by himself." The

literacy practices described above contained features of abstract thinking. For example, Connor's summary of his homeschooling classes required an analysis of the parts of the day and then categorizing them according to a common element (how much he likes them). The activity itself was about *his* opinion of the classes, much as his library list contained *his* opinion of the books that he read. With Connor, the development of self-consciousness is occurring outside of the setting of formal school.

Smedley (1992) has argued that "given the size of classes, few meaningful interchanges are possible on a given day between teacher and individual student. This contrasts to the home education communication environment...Each child at home has immediate access to the attention of a significant adult. (p. 12). And Shyers (1992) concluded that "based on the social learning theory that children learn by imitating the behaviors of people whom they observe, home schooled children would thus most likely imitate the behaviors of their parents" (p. 6).

That Connor has constant contact with his mother throughout their instructional interactions is important. One feature of the literacy lessons that is similar to classroom instruction is the use of what Mehan (1979) refers to as "three-part instructional sequences" which consist of a teacher initiated request, a student reply, and a teacher evaluation, and is an essential component of an instructional sequence" (1979, p. 52). Mehan identified the sequences an essential feature to classroom instruction. These initiation-response-evaluation (I-R-E) sequences were present in the talk, throughout their interactions. For example, in the Math Lesson Madeline initiated at line 57, Connor responded at lines 58 and 60 and Madeline evaluated at line 61 and then immediately provided the next initiation:

57       MADELINE: Okay, alright. The second one.  
 58       CONNOR: (2) Use the formal algorithm for addition.  
 59       MADELINE: Mmm hmm.  
 60       CONNOR: (2) For example (4)  $5 + 0$  is 5,  $1 + 5$  is 6,  $4 + 3$  is 7.  
 61       MADELINE: Okay, good. Alright, how about the third one 'cause  
 62       we didn't do much of that yesterday.

Here Madeline initiated at lines 114 and 115, Connor responded at lines 116 and 117,  
 and Madeline evaluated at line 118 and immediately initiated:

114       MADELINE: Mmm hmm. (13) That's nice bud, I saw you  
 115       switched those two. Why'd you switch them?  
 116       CONNOR: Um because I thought breakfast for the family would  
 117       cost less then, less then thirty-six dollars.  
 118       MADELINE: Okay, good job. Can you please write down all  
 119       those, all those, all the amount of money, and add them all  
 120       together?  
 121       CONNOR: Sure. That's 17.25 (19)

And here, at line 215 Madeline evaluated Connor's response and moved to a new I-R-E  
 sequence, with Connor responding at line 220 and Madeline evaluating at line 221.

213       CONNOR: 36 and 17 is fifty-three. No, yeah, fifty-three. 54.10  
 214       and one. 55.10.  
 215       MADELINE: Okay, that looks good. Alright good. (5) Hey, alright  
 216       okay. If we're gonna write this just as cents, how many cents  
 217       would that be?  
 218       CONNOR: Oh my gosh.  
 219       MADELINE: How many pennies would that be.  
 220       CONNOR: Um, five thousand, five hundred and ten cents.  
 221       MADELINE: Okay, nice job. Alright.

I-R-E sequences were also present throughout the handwriting lesson:

MADELINE:

16                       What's wrong with this one bud?  
 17       CONNOR: (2) Hmm (3) I don't know. The loop is too small.  
 18       MADELINE: The loop is too small, mmm hmm.  
 19       CONNOR: The undercurve is too, is a little bit not slanted, but  
 20       MADELINE: =Okay, and um=  
 21       CONNOR: =And the stroke isn't supposed to cross, like it should  
 22       on a G..  
 23       MADELINE: Good, excellent.

And

55       MADELINE: That's okay. That's alright. It's not a bad first try at  
56       all. I like the angle here. Can you bring that out a little bit more,  
57       with a big old pelican mouth? Can you bring that one out more?  
58       Good, very good. What about that? (3) Nice, good. Very good.  
59       And this one? The angle, I'm happy about that because I know that  
60       was really tough with the j.

However, the IRE sequences found within the structure of this homeschooling family differed from the sequences found in classrooms. According to Mehan, within the classroom, after the initiation, the student who is allowed to respond is chosen when the teacher (1) names a specific student, (2) picks a student who has raised his or her hand, or (3) allows any student to respond without being called on (Mehan, 1979, p. 95).

“They [students] must know with whom, when, and where they can speak and act” (1979, p. 133). Therefore, within classrooms, the teacher evaluates both the content of the response (whether the answer is right or wrong) and the form of the response (whether the response is interactionally appropriate) (Mehan, 1979, p. 135).

What is unique about the IRE structure occurring in the context of this homeschooling family is that, with only one student present, it is always, already implied, from the start of the lesson, who is to respond and who is being evaluated. Throughout the three lessons Connor did not raise his hand and Madeline used Connor's name only one time. She uses “you and you're” consistently, as well as terms of affection such as baby, honey, sweetie (twice), mister, my friend, bud (twice), and babe, which would be inappropriate and impractical in a classroom setting, as it would not indicate to whom the teacher was speaking. However, this can be done in this homeschooling family because there are no other students. The student, in this case Connor, has the constant attention of and is required to pay constant attention to what

his mother is saying and doing. In schools, students learn when they can and cannot respond. In homeschooling, the child learns that he or she must respond. When Connor responds incorrectly, there is no other student to which his mother can turn for a correct answer. During the math lesson the following exchange occurred:

194 CONNOR: The answer is 52.10  
195 MADELINE: Really?  
196 CONNOR: Yeah, 36.50, 17.25, 75 cents, and 60 cents equals  
197 52.10.  
198 MADELINE: Can I check your answer, please.  
199 CONNOR: Sure

Madeline had asked Connor to add a series of numbers. After his response at line 194 she asked “really” which Connor interpreted as questioning his response and he affirms his previous answer. At 195 and 198 she did not call on Connor, but he responded anyway.

200 MADELINE: Want to do it with me?  
201 CONNOR: No.  
202 MADELINE: To see if I’m doing it right, okay.  
203 CONNOR: Alright.

When Connor denied his mother’s request to “do it” with her and she then repeated the request, giving the reason for it, and he agreed.

209 MADELINE: Add one, six, seven, eight and seven  
210 and six, and one carry the two. (3) Two and six is eight and seven  
211 is fifteen. Five, carry the one. Three and two are five. Want to  
212 change that one.  
213 CONNOR: 36 and 17 is fifty-three. No, yeah, fifty-three. 54.10  
214 and one. 55.10.  
215 MADELINE: Okay, that looks good.

The exchanges continued until Connor arrived at the correct answer, which Madeline evaluated as “good.” Within a classroom, other students would be available to respond. If a teacher pays that much time with one student, the other students’ attention can

wane. Therefore, in addition to autonomy, a normative quality of homeschooling is attentiveness because the lesson is constantly presented to him.

That Connor is beginning to share the same social world as his mother can be seen in the exchanges that occurred at the end of the language lesson. Madeline read to Connor a sentence and Connor wrote the sentence.

- 231       MADELINE: Good, babe. Please show Kevin this page here. (7)  
232       Alright, can you read this so I, you can dictate it to me. (4) Can 233  
          you read=  
234       CONNOR: =I'll pretend I'm you, okay.  
235       MADELINE: Oh, okay, good. Will you be as nice as me?  
236       CONNOR: Yeah.  
237       MADELINE: Alright, good.  
238       CONNOR: (2) And here's your sentence, dear.

Madeline asked Connor to read the next sentence to her. He identified this as an activity that his mother normally did and “pretended” to be her. He addressed her as “dear” and read to her. The exchange closed when Connor, the novice reader and writer, evaluated what his mother wrote, as an experienced teacher would have done:

- 254       MADELINE: Okay. Is that alright?  
255       CONNOR: Eventually great big billy goat gruff hit the troll with  
256       his horns so that he never found his way back to the bridge. I never  
257       knew you wrote cursive this well, Connor.  
258       MADELINE: [Laughs] Okay, we're done.  
259       CONNOR: Okay.

This exchange demonstrates that, in addition to developing the skills and knowledge that allow him to participate in the literacy practices of the social world of his mother, he is also developing the interactional competence that comes with inhabiting the role of a teacher.

#### 4.5 Summary

In this chapter I presented an analysis of the first family, the Smiths. The analysis of the homeschooling structure revealed one that was similar to formal schooling. For example, this family had a daily schedule, organized according to subjects (math, language, cursive, history, etc.). There was no explicit teaching during the summer and the subjects are organized according to a graded (first grade, second grade) curriculum. Connor was evaluated with formal methods such as tests and worksheets. However, there were elements here that are quite distinct from formal schooling. The participants inhabited different roles: The parent was also the teacher and the child was also the student. In addition to this there was only one student being taught, which required constant attention to and interaction between both the participants. Within this structure, Connor and his mother engaged in literacy practices in which Connor utilized skills such as using writing to organizing a lesson on math ratios; analyzing, categorizing, and synthesizing perceptual experiences to write an essay about Connor's stuffed animals, write an essay about his evaluation of the homeschooling subjects, and write a thank-you letter; abstracting from and summarizing a story; and evaluating his cursive writing. These skills and the more formal structure of the homeschooling environment appear to support the alleged connection between formal schooling and literacy. Both promote categorization, abstract thinking, independence, and autonomy. However, one noticeable structural difference associated with homeschooling was that Connor, being the only student, had the constant attention of and is required to pay constant attention to what his mother is saying and doing.

In the next chapter I will examine the homeschooling structure and literacy practices of the second family (the Jones). The structure of these practices were are less formal



than the family presented in this chapter, but the skills used in the literacy practices shared some similarities with the practices of the family presented in this chapter.

# Chapter 5

## Second Homeschooling Family- The Jones

### 5.1 The Jones

In the previous chapter the skills involved in the Smiths' literacy practices and their more formal structure appeared to support the hypothesized connection between schooling and literacy. Both promoted categorization, abstract thinking, independence, and autonomy. However, there were several structural differences associated with the Smiths. With the small child to adult ratio, Connor had the constant attention of and was required to pay constant attention to an adult with whom he had a close relationship. In this chapter I will examine the homeschooling structure and literacy practices of the second family, the Jones. In contrast to the Smiths the structure of the Jones' practices appeared less formal. However, the skills used in the practices shared some similarities. Below I will present an analysis of the Jones. This chapter contains the reasons why the Jones chose to homeschool their child, Charles. It will also present a description of the homeschooling structure and how that structure is similar to and different than formal schooling. This analysis is based on the interviews with and observations of the family. After this I will present an analysis of some of the literacy practices in which the family engages. The analysis will reveal skills such as analyzing elements of speech and words, using definitions, categorization, and synthesizing. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the possible consequences of the literacy practices observed.

The Jones resided in a small community in the Monongahela Valley, approximately 25 miles southeast of Pittsburgh. The family consisted of two parents, Marcie and Derek, and their two children, Charles (6 years and 2 months) and Diane (2 years and 5 months). When asked why they decided to homeschool, both parents provided a criticism of public schools. Marcie described public schools as “academically inadequate” and the social setting in these schools as “harmful.” The academic inadequacy stems from “the curriculum thing” which “seems to be much more geared towards keeping thirty children sitting rather than actually teaching them...the pace that they go at is geared toward just getting everyone going at the same speed, so if your child is at all behind or at all ahead it’s disastrous.” They had looked at the kindergarten in their school district and “at that point we found out that he was a couple years ahead of kindergarten...And what was he going to do in kindergarten, other than being incredibly bored and disruptive? And so we went, oh well I guess we’re homeschooling him.”

The parents described the social setting of the school as harmful because the children were “being corralled” and teachers conducted “crowd control” in a classroom setting. Marcie described the children in school as “obnoxious, out of control, [and] misbehaving” which she attributed to “the high kid to adult ratio coupled with a kind of an artificial peer group where all the kids sit with all the other kids that are of the same age, give or take, you know, six months.” As a result of this setting children were not given “a lot exposure to a variety of different level of kids.” The curriculum and behavior problems in schools were understood to be based on the design of a social

setting that has a high child to adult ratio in which the children are all approximately the same age.

In addition to criticizing public schools, both parents mentioned their “own personal issues” with schools. Marcie reported that “I barely went to school, barely did anything and was still salutatorian.” Derek reported that “I got picked on a lot for being too smart and therefore languished in school and barely managed to pass...I decided I wanted to be a musician and I just needed to do what I needed in order to get out.” Both of these statements revealed the belief that school attendance was not necessary for success, either while attending school or after graduating from school. Both parents implied that schooling instills in students the attitude that learning occurs only, or at least, predominantly, in schools. Therefore, one of their goals for homeschooling was to teach that learning and education transcends the boundaries of established by school.

According to Derek:

The most important thing for me...is that they continue to love learning even after the badges you get...Learning isn't about filling in the worksheet and getting the grade...Yeah, that this isn't like a prison sentence. Once you get eighteen, you know twelve grades, you start to live. This is about learning, you know that's the goal, that should be sort of the lifetime goal...And that learning doesn't end when you have your high school diploma.

They “researched public schools and homeschooling” and considered “some sort of Montessori private school.” That “would have just meant that all of my work income would have gone to the school.” More importantly, Derek noted that the criticism leveled against public schools is applicable to private schools, as a private school is “an education environment that would require, you know, a set number of two or three teachers to twenty or thirty students.” Therefore, the parents wanted to construct a different setting for educating their children.

## 5.2 Homeschooling Structure

One way in which these parents attempted to change the educational setting was to create one in which education was not something specialized and distinct from other aspects of the children's lives. The temporal and spatial boundaries of this homeschooling family tended to be more relaxed and fluid than those found in a formal school setting. When talking about what she does in a typical week, Marcie stated:

I don't break it up into five days a week and two days off. It's year round and it's all seven days. In fact I will often do those lessons on Saturday and Sunday, I just don't prioritize them as much because dad's home and I'd rather have kids spend time with dad. But, I do stuff...The thing you have to realize is every night he reads for a good hour and I don't consider that homeschooling...So he reads a ton every night. Everything, you know, history books, science books. He just reads and consumes a huge volume of books every evening. And I forget that that's even schooling time...Um, in car rides I mean we cover big history conversations or we play twenty questions and he categorizes into, you know, is it a mammal, is it an amphibian during car rides because it's part of, you know, car games that we play. So there is homeschooling that I really don't realize is homeschooling.

Marcie described homeschooling that occurred during times (Saturdays, Sundays, and in the summer) and in places (in the car) that were outside of the framework of typical schools. In one of her journal entries, after attempting to catalogue everything that Charles read, she wrote "it's been too hard to keep track of what he reads at night... so I'm just going to list Bedtime reading as being 1-2 hours of reading whatever he finds in the house" which indicated the learning opportunities in the home were ubiquitous.

Marcie's statement that there is homeschooling that she didn't realize was homeschooling indicated that process of teaching and learning within the home is ubiquitous, but not readily apparent as it is happening. Derek agreed with this:

You never stop teaching, I guess, as a homeschooler...we don't consider it on and off times...you get good, as a homeschooler, finding a lesson in everything...You know, going out and watching the snow fall and turning that into the three phases of liquid, I mean the three phases of matter.

Marcie's journal entries described several instances of finding a lesson in everything:

Charles went to Kennywood and "read any sign or direction that needed reading...he carefully read all of the height requirements." He also "asked to play a computer game that is reading intensive. Game requires choosing appropriate sentence responses to questions." At bedtime he "reread some chapters from Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle" and "read through a math book that discusses how to do math in your head." While at his grandmother's house Charles spent between one and two hours drawing. Marcie believed that this activity is important because "I think it helps penmanship." Marcie also stated that "Monday we have cleaning and cooking day, and gardening, and you know that is a teaching thing, you know it's measuring and there's a lot of teaching around stuff like that." Charles also created his own lessons:

Charles made up his own game...and made a map and 'directions' to go with it...some of his directions were written-out words, other parts entailed the first letter of words being an 'abbreviation' for the word. The game was a role-playing adventure game and he used words like character/setting/plot in his description. I introduced the terms of mood and theme to him. He decided his theme was a mystery and the mood of this game was creepy. He worked on the game, off and on, for about two hours.

These descriptions of everyday learning activities were considered to be learning events that occur within the normal circumstances of daily living of the family.

Despite the relaxed temporal and spatial boundaries, there was an explicit teaching time mixed in with the informal learning. When asked to describe a typical week, Marcie replied "I'd say I definitely try on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday to at least do a good half hour of sitting down with paper and pen and I'm teaching you something,

darn it.” Although homeschooling practices occurred during the week and on weekends, there was a weekly schedule that was followed:

Tuesday is library. That’s the day we go to the library...my mother started teaching art. She’s a pretty good artist, so she does art with him on Tuesdays, so Tuesdays we go to the library...My mom’s doing this integrated like science and art, you know we’re learning parts of the bird, and drawing the bird, and, you know, learning about the Audubon Society. But I don’t have to do that because she does that. That’s her homeschooling thing...Um, and then on Fridays, my husband has every other Friday off, so Friday is our outing day.

According to Marcie, the temporal organization of each day was “approximate.”

Lessons, which last approximately thirty minutes, usually occurred in the morning because “afternoon is usually when we go, you know, go out. It’s always going to be in the morning, it’s always going to be after breakfast and feeding the animals and before lunch...in between nine and eleven. But I’m not real anal about it. I just like to stick it in there sometime.” Derek reported that “if it gets too late in the day, he gets tired, it doesn’t go as well. Morning before lunch tends to be an optimal time. As Diane gets older and we start to get to figure out more of her patterns, you know it might be different for her.” Although the times at which instruction occurred were at approximately the same time, there are two important features to note: First, a half-hour lesson was given a two-hour window. This contrasted with the relatively regimented schedule of classes that existed in schools. Also, as opposed to school, where children conformed to a pre-established schedule, the time was molded to fit the child. Morning was an optimal time for Charles, but their daughter may be homeschooled differently.

This mixture of formal and informal elements could be found in other aspects of the family’s homeschooling practices. Despite the name “homeschooling” the home was not considered the only place that learning takes place. In addition to using the library,

this family had “memberships to the science museum and the zoo and if it’s a kid activity we probably have a membership to it.” However, just as there was a daily and weekly schedule, there was also a place where explicit instruction took place. According to Marcie:

We do have a schooling room, but since we moved it hasn’t been set up. So where I’m teaching them right now isn’t the place I eventually want to teach them...Sometimes I’m at the dining room table and sometimes I’m at the couch. We don’t have a desk or anything...if he has to do a lot of writing. I mean if it’s penmanship and I want him to really be focused on his writing he’ll sit at the table, where he can focus on his writing. If we’re, you know, reading or discussing something, if it’s more than just looking it’s more comfortable for me to sit on the couch and have him sit beside me.

In this context the activity, whether penmanship or reading, determined where it occurred. The activity of writing required, or is facilitated by, a hard surface, while reading does not necessarily require this.

There are other spatial elements of homeschooling that were similar to those found in formal schooling. For example, on Wednesday Charles attended enrichment classes at a cooperative school that was run by the PALS organization. Marcie described Wednesday’s events as:

We show up at ten o’clock and he takes two hours of a Montessori um socialization kindergarten type setting with a preschool- kindergarten type setting. He takes a half hour of Mandarin where I accompany him and my two-and-a-half-year-old accompanies us and we all learn Mandarin together.

The enrichment classes shared features of formal schooling, as the classes occurred at a particular time and place. However, Charles’ parents and younger sister had the option of attending the same class. This differed from the formal structure of schools, where children were, for the most part, separated by age. That Marcie attended this class and was learning Mandarin also reinforced the point about learning being a lifelong process.



The identities and roles of the participants involved in homeschooling are complex: Children are students and parents are teachers. And, in this case, parents/teachers can also be students. Although the PALS class was similar in some ways to formal schooling, it also had elements that resemble homeschooling.

This Jones had recently introduced a curriculum into their homeschooling activities. Marcie and Derek enrolled Charles in the PA Cyber-school program, and began using the Calvert's curriculum. Because of this, Charles was considered to be enrolled in the public school system. According to the Pennsylvania Cyber Charter School website:

PA Cyber is a public school so the tuition costs are paid by dollars allocated by the state and district of residence for each child's education...A cyber charter school is a public school with no tuition where students are taught from home through instruction provided via the internet and a computer. At PA Cyber all students are given a state-of-the-art laptop computer, a internet connection, and textbooks to take real-time classes via the Internet with certified teachers, as well as lessons that are designed to move at the student's own pace.  
(<http://www.pacyber.org/families/faqs.aspx>)

Despite being enrolled in cyber schooling Marcie said that “we still consider ourselves homeschooling because our only cyber school experience is turning in tests to show what his grade level is.” The material presented by the cyber school to the family was filtered through the homeschooling activities of the family, which appeared to be based on an tacit agreement between the cyber school and homeschooling families. According to Marcie:

PA Cyber has sort of marketed themselves a bit more to the homeschoolers, which means we'll stay out of your hair, we'll give you stuff and you call us and we won't bug you. We take all their curricula and sort through it and find what's useful and what's not useful. But all I have to do is turn in the tests, so I don't make him do all the workbooks. I just go, yes you know how to do this. Please take the test and show them that you know how to do it, and then we move on.

According to Derek:

I think PA Cyber did a wise thing in that they don't specifically market themselves as that, but they, if you don't have any questions, if you're a homeschooler and you know what you're doing anyway and you don't want a lot of interaction with teachers they don't force that.

In her journals, Marcie described how she utilized the Calvert's curriculum:

*Sunday, June 17, 2007*

While at his grandmother's house Charles filled in one "reading/science/writing test for 2<sup>nd</sup> grade (every 20<sup>th</sup> Calvert lesson has one which is meant to be one per month)." This took fifteen minutes.

*Thursday, June 21, 2007*

Charles filled in another test section, which took about 10 minutes...These tests were to complete 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and we send them to PA Cyber. We are not really doing all the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade work, as it doesn't seem to be required...I just give him the books to read and then have him do the tests. He had previously turned in all of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade math, but the writing sections in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade tests are hard for him (due to his cursive and spelling abilities still being a challenge).

*Friday, June 22, 2007*

He is working through the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade testing book pretty independently. I tell him to just fill in as many dots (multiple choice for the reading tests) as he feels like doing at the time. There doesn't seem to be any part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade Calverts reading that is problematic for him to do in his own...I never read the science textbook to him; he initiated reading it shortly after receiving it and finished the books within a couple of nights (being out of library books at the time).

*Thursday, June 28, 2007*

He spent the day at my mothers and completed more of the Calverts' tests. She said he spent maybe 15-30 minutes on it. I had a phone call with the Cyberschool, explaining that we couldn't possibly do 6 hours of schoolwork a day (I didn't emphasize that I'm not sure if we do one hour. Since he's already read every book they sent him and isn't having any trouble finishing the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade test, I figure we're doing fine. When I asked if I really should read out loud the science book...when the boy has already read it himself and isn't having any trouble with the questions, they backed off. I believe in the last couple weeks, due to my being so busy with my own work, he has almost completed a school years worth of reading tests, and about half the year in science.

These descriptions were all similar in that they showed that Charles, for the most part, worked through the curriculum predominantly on his own, with little help from a parent/teacher. What is also important to note is the relatively short amount of time

needed to complete the requirements for the second grade. The curriculum is designed on the assumption that it will be taught over a six hour day and take one school year to complete. Marcie acknowledged that Charles was not completing all of the coursework, as most of it seemed unnecessary to complete the second grade. This is consistent with the finding by Romanowski (2002), who, when studying how homeschooled students adjusted to public schools found they had to cope with the “slow pace of instruction... The students thought that many teachers spent too much time covering content and giving directions and that a great deal of the work was unchallenging busy work” (p. 4). This also reinforces Marcie’s earlier stated belief that teachers in school are practice “crowd control” in the classroom.

The use of the Calvert’s curriculum, via cyber-schooling, had enabled the family to use a formal method of evaluating Charles by giving him tests. The introduction of this formal evaluation method into the informal structure of their homeschooling was, according to Marcie, “a totally new experience for us. Um, reading wise, you know, it was just a matter of can you read. I mean I’ve had a very sequential process of teaching reading so I didn’t move on ‘til the next step until he knew how to do the step before. Um, I never tested him.” The sentiment here was that, as his teacher, she saw when Charles had mastered the material. A similar description was offered when talking about math:

I give him problems to do like in math. I mean we would go through a math section and then I’d say try to do this problem and I really always emphasized to him that my job is to teach him, so if he did not know how to do something he would say, hmm, you know show me...I don’t know what I’m doing and so I would go in and re-teach it. So tests were never...we never used a test. He either knew how to do it or he didn’t. If he didn’t I’d teach him.

Derek noted that:

as a homeschooler there's no real, you know, complicated evaluation process to kind of assess where your student is since you are with them all the time. You just sort of know...you know, one, what you taught them...And, two, you know how easily he handles those things, those skills that you taught him. If he is struggling with one of the things that you've been trying to teach him, you continue working on it.

The close, consistent contact between a parent and child, coupled with the low adult/child ratio in the home made more formal and impersonal evaluations unnecessary. Formal evaluations are necessary when one adult assesses many different students at the same time. In her journal Marcie noted that Charles was recently tested for the cyber school gifted program. His lowest verbal score was in spelling (70<sup>th</sup> percentile) despite the fact "we've never done any spelling tests or guided spelling exercises (other than my telling him how to spell and how to sound out words he asks me about), so I was somewhat surprised to know he was above average in that area." In a journal entry, dated Monday, June 25, 2007 she described a "spelling session" in the context of a writing assignment: "I made sure he spelled every word correctly, by having him tell me ahead of time how he was planning on spelling it. For the words he didn't know how to spell, I wrote them off to the side and he copied them." This activity, which appeared to be successful in helping Charles learn to spell would be, more than likely, problematic in schools, as copying is something prohibited, especially on formal evaluations.

Another evaluative tool introduced by the cyberschool curriculum was worksheets and the activity of answering questions after completing reading assignments. This, too, contrasted with the way in which this family evaluated Charles' reading comprehension.

They sent him all these books that were phenomenally under his reading level, ...And I would go over and he would vaguely show an interest in the first one or two and then he actually told me I don't want to read any of those books any

more because there is paperwork. Would you want to read a book if you had to fill out forms every time you read a book? ...He would stop reading if he had to go through the drudgery of all this paperwork, you know, fill in the little circle with the correct answer. And he specifically didn't want to read the Calvert's books, not because they were hard or because he had trouble, but because it's a hassle.

This comparison is similar to the distinction that Gatto (2001) made between library books and school textbooks, which he elaborated into a wider comparison between libraries and schools:

The editors of the school edition [of *Moby Dick*] provided a package of prefabricated questions and more than 100 chapter-by-chapter abstracts and interpretations of their own...Real books don't do that. Real books demand people actively participate asking their own questions...Books that show you the best questions to ask aren't just stupid, they hurt the mind under the guise of helping it—exactly the way standardized tests do. (Gatto, p. 51)

Gatto associates “real books” with public libraries and school books with schools and notes that libraries “are never age-segregated, nor do they presume to segregate readers by questionable tests of ability” (2001, p. 51). There was no explicit instruction from a librarian, as “the librarian doesn't tell me what to read, doesn't tell me what sequence of reading I have to follow...The librarian lets me ask my own questions and helps me when I want help, not when she decides I need it” (2001, p. 51). There is no set schedule followed in a library and “if I feel like reading all day long, that's okay with the librarian, who doesn't compel me to stop at intervals by ringing a bell in my ear” (2001, p. 51). There are no evaluations used by the library, as “the library never humiliates me by posting ranked lists of good” (2001, p. 51). In one of her observations, dated, Sunday, June 17, Marcie noted that as Charles was “running out of new library books” to read he was reading the more “educational ones out of boredom and desperation. He has begun complaining that he has nothing to read.” Marcie

described a more informal evaluation process that takes place when she and Charles talk about the stories:

He's reading complicated, you know, mini novels and stuff and I'll just casually ask him, you know, have you read that book yet. Can we return back to the library or not. And he's like, yeah I finished it and I'm like how did you like it and, and we'll talk about it and I'll say, what happened I didn't get a chance to read that book And we'll talk about the book to make sure he's understanding the plot and not confused. But he reads for fun. He doesn't read because he has to read the book. So if he doesn't understand the book, which happens, The Littles, he actually brought me back The Littles and said this book's too hard for me, keep it until I am older. And I said okay and I put it aside for him.

As was the case with tests, formal, impersonal evaluations were unnecessary due to the extensive contact and close relationship between the teacher/parent and the student/child. Traditionally, teachers only have contact with children within the temporal and spatial confines of school, and in the presence of a large number of students. Within homeschooling, the teachers are around a small number of children throughout the day, thereby getting a larger context to observe and informally evaluate. Due to the small number of children involved (in this family, two) it is easier to have a more in-depth awareness of what the children can and cannot do.

### 5.3 Literacy Practices

While talking about teaching children to read, Marcie gave a concrete example of why having close contact with a student is important:

You sit the child on your lap or they sit beside you so they can see the pages being turned in the correct direction and you go underneath the words with your finger so they know that the little squiggles on the page say something. And that's sort of the pre-reading teaching, which I'd have to say the preschools having this whole group of children up there and flipping the book does not teach the proper direction of page turning. It teaches the opposite, so it's important to have the kid here, looking.

Here Marcie contrasted the flexibility of homeschooling with the more structured organization in preschools. While it made sense that schools had to be organized this way as it would be difficult, if not impossible, to have more than a couple of children sitting next to the teacher, that did not mean it was the optimal way to teach any one particular child to read. This flexibility of homeschooling was possible due to the low adult to child ratio, which did not exist in the typical structure of formal schooling. Below I will examine how literacy, which is assumed to be the content of formal education, was configured within this more informal structure.

The literacy practices described by this family vary widely. During the initial interview Marcie explained the practice by which she taught Charles to read and was teaching his younger sister, Diane, to read. According to Marcie, “when a kid is one to two-and-a-half you teach them the shapes...it’s important to recognize shapes in order to be able to recognize letters that those squiggles of lines have a, you know, a name.” This description carried with it a specific criticism of the structure of schools. In schools, due to the high child-to-adult ratio, children sit across from the teacher and thereby receive an inverse view of the process of reading. Marcie continued:

I really emphasize the letter sounds, not the letter names because it doesn’t help a child to be able to say C, A, T, and then be able to say the word ‘cat’. You know they have to say cu-a-t. So if, Charles, he knew all his letter sounds before he actually knew the names of them. He just sort of picked up the names as time went on. Um, I also don’t emphasize the alphabet at all. This idiotic emphasis on the ABC song only helps people if they’re alphabetizing. It does not help children read.

According to Marcie, Charles’ reads well enough that “I no longer teach reading.

Reading is not a subject that is taught to him” and currently the focus is on “cursive and handwriting.”

One of the handwriting lessons was recorded during the observations sessions with this family. The analysis below examines how literacy was integrated in the practice of homeschooling. This lesson was in progress when I arrived at the home. As I set up the recorder, Marcie and Charles were seated next to each other at the dining room table, looking at a piece of lined paper with the sentence “I saw a cat” written on the paper. As I turned the recorder on the following exchange occurred:

- 2        MARCIE: (To researcher) I am going to start in a few minutes. I  
3        told him when you came we were doing his lessons, so. [Charles is  
4        seated to Marcie’s left, writing, with a pencil, on a piece of paper.  
5        The sentence ‘I saw a cat’ has already been written in pen.]  
6        RESEARCHER: Oh, I started this. [points to tape recorder] I  
7        though you were doing something now.

Marcie did not consider what she is doing to be part of a planned homeschooling lesson yet, as she said she was going to start his lessons, in a few minutes, after I arrived. Since this activity had begun before I had arrived, she identified it as something apart from the lesson that she had planned on doing. Despite this, this activity continued, and revealed several tools utilized in learning about the practice of writing.

- 8        MARCIE: (to Charles) Are you starting a new sentence?  
9        CHARLES: I, I’m doing something about a new sentence.  
10       MARCIE: Because there’s a period, um, for a new sentence,  
11       we want to start a capital letter. Every new sentence has a capital  
12       letter.  
13       CHARLES: Ooh.  
14       MARCIE: So that’s easy ‘cause you know how to make capital  
15       letters. (3)  
16       CHARLES: [writes ‘I’]  
17       MARCIE: I, very good. So what’s the sentence you want to write  
18       about?

This instruction revealed an organizational aspect of writing. The use of periods and capital letters allowed Charles to demarcate the two sentences. There are no periods or



capital letters involved in the act of speaking. The use of periods and capital letters allowed for a written analysis of the sentences that were spoken. Marcie identified Charles as someone who knew how to make capital letters, and he fulfilled that role by writing a capital I. Marcie initiated, asking Charles about a new sentence. When he responded, she evaluated what he did.

Several studies have argued that alphabetic literacy is a necessary condition for analyzing elements of speech (Morais, Bertleson, Cary, and Alegria, 1987; Read, Yun-Fei, Hong-Yin, and Bao-Quing, 1987). The analysis of the elements of words was demonstrated in this lesson, as Marcie presented the tool of analyzing words into smaller sounds in order to aid in the spelling of a word:

- 113      MARCIE: Oh I see. It was brown with. Finish the word with. (to  
114      dogs) Well you guys aren't just =  
115      CHARLES: =With it.  
116      MARCIE: With, do you know how to spell with?  
117      CHARLES: [writes 'w'] Next. It?  
118      MARCIE: Yep.  
119      CHARLES: [writes a 'I'] What's it?  
120      MARCIE: What do you think it is? (5) Yes, with, what makes a th?  
121      (2) So w-i=  
122      CHARLES: =The t. (3) [writes 't']  
123      MARCIE: Uh hu, I see the i. W, i, t, what's left?

In order to help him spell the word, Marcie broke the word apart into smaller parts and presented the 'th' sound to him. The practice of breaking a word up was a tool that Charles later utilized when he was asked to spell the word "spots":

- 222      MARCIE: Do you know how to spell spots? I bet you do. (7) Do  
223      you know how to?  
224      CHALRES: [writes 's'] (2) p?  
225      MARCIE: o  
226      CHARLES: o  
227      MARCIE: I'm sorry, I do know how to spell spots. How do you  
228      think spots would be spelled?  
229      CHARLES: (whispers) pa, pa.

230        MARCIE: But do you know how to do a p? Can I show you?  
231        CHARLES: I think I do.

This lesson also presented to Charles the arbitrary nature of writing. First, this was a lesson in cursive, which is distinct from printing. Therefore, he is learning that different letters and a different configuration of letters represented the same sound, letter, and word. Secondly, the lesson also contained a discussion of silent letters, a category of writing that has no counterpart in speaking. You can see a silent letter but cannot, by definition, hear it. This became evident with a discussion of the correct spelling of the word ‘white’.

143        MARCIE: White, do you have an idea how to spell white? Okay,  
144        how do you think it would be spelled?  
145        CHARLES: w, i, t.  
146        MARCIE: Well, that would be wit, right?  
147        CHARLES: (whispers) White. (3) (louder) e.

The ‘i’ in wit and the ‘i’ in white were written identically, but pronounced differently. This can be contrasted with the point made earlier that the same sound was represented with different symbols. Here, different sounds were represented with the same symbol. Charles appeared aware of the function of the silent ‘e’, as he whispered the word and, even though he did not pronounce the sound of e, he added it to the end of the word. However, he did not pronounce the silent ‘h’ and leaves that letter out. The arbitrary qualities of writing were also discussed in the journal entry dated Monday, June 25, 2007. During a similar exercise (writing a short, descriptive paragraph) Charles “questioned why the word ‘I’ is always capitalized and the one letter word ‘a’ isn’t (I have no idea).”

In the exchanges above, Charles whispered a response (lines 229 and 147). Usually one whispers when they don’t want someone to hear what they are saying.

However, there were only two other people present, the researcher and his mother, and, prior to that, Charles spoke about the word white, and, at his previous turn (line 145) had said ‘w’, ‘i’, and ‘t’. He did not whisper then, and, therefore, it is probably not likely that he said something that he did not want anyone else in the room to hear. It didn’t appear that he was talking to anyone. A more plausible explanation is that this is an example of what Vygotsky (1978) described as the “intrapersonal function” of language:

The greatest change in children’s capacity to use language as a problem-solving tool takes place somewhat later in their development, when socialized speech (which has previously been used to address an adult) *is turned inward*. Instead of appealing to an adult, children appeal to themselves; language thus takes on an intrapersonal function in addition to its interpersonal use. (p. 27)

While it is conceivable that Charles’ whisper was directed to his mother, that does not explain why he would have whispered it. It is more plausible to believe that the whisper was made for him, and was an example of turning speech inward, as a tool to solve the problem of the difference between the word *wit* and *white* and for sounding out the letters of the word *spot* in order to spell it correctly. Charles used speech as a way of guiding his action. According to Vygotsky (1978), words break up the perceptual experience and allows the child to “create a specific plan” and achieve “a much broader range of activity, applying *tools* not only to those objects that lie near at hand, but searching for and preparing such stimuli as can be useful in the solution of a task” (p. 26). For Vygotsky, speech breaks up the simultaneity of perceptual experience and “restructures the whole psychological process and enables the child to master her movement” (p. 35). In Charles’ case, the use of speech enabled him to break up the perceptual experience of words that he heard (*spots* and *white*) into tools

(the letters) in order to solve a task (how to spell a word). However, in the case of the word white, there were two silent letters:

- 148 MARCIE: That would make sense, w, i, t, e.  
149 CHARLES: Uhhh  
150 MARCIE: You okay?  
151 CHARLES: [begins to write 'w']  
152 MARCIE: Stop, but that's not how you spell it. (laughs) That  
153 would make perfect sense. However, sometimes, now watch  
154 carefully.  
155 CHARLES: (something indecipherable)  
156 MARCIE: [writes 'wite' and 'white' at the bottom of the page]  
157 Yeah, what extra letter did I put in there?  
158 CHARLES: T?  
159 MARCIE: You said w, i, t, e, which would make sense, except this  
160 one has a silent [points to h]  
161 CHARLES: h  
162 MARCIE: Yes, some words just do.  
163 CHARLES: Hu uh uh uh, silent h's.

Marcie twice (lines 153 and 159) evaluated Charles' response as sensible, albeit incorrect. Upon hearing the first evaluation Charles began to spell the word, indicating that he interpreted her evaluation to mean he correctly responded. In order to repair this she wrote, at the bottom of the page, the words 'white' and 'wite'. Marcie emphasized the arbitrary nature when she says "some words just do" have silent letters. The silent 'h' cannot be indicated by merely saying the word white. It must be written down. Therefore, in addition to sounds, the actual writing became a tool to solve the task.

In addition to revealing several characteristics of literacy (metalinguistic, arbitrary association between marks and sounds, etc.) this lesson also revealed the identities of the participants. Throughout the lesson Marcie consistently established herself as the expert. She reminded Charles ask her if he needed help spelling a word:

- 52 MARCIE: Any words you want help spelling just ask. (12). Now, a  
53 'w' is a weird thing to connect. It's from the very top, you sort of

54 shoot out and then you go into an 'a' and of course your 's', which  
55 you know how to make. (6) [writes 'was' at the bottom of the  
56 page]

She also consistently demonstrated to him how to write the letters, and provided both an explanation and a written example at the bottom of the page.

24 MARCIE: Yes, okay. When you're connecting a cursive to that, all  
25 you do is just write a single t. You really don't have to connect it to  
26 the I, it's going to look a little weird because, it will be just like a t  
27 right up against the I. (4) But the t would be little, the t would be  
28 small. Remember how to write small t's? [writes 't' at the bottom  
29 of the page] Up to the top. Oh, my pencil needs sharpening. Down  
30 and across. Okay?

And

75 MARCIE: Okay. (5) Very nice. And, hey you go into an r and  
76 that's going to be a little tough. Can I connect the b-r for you  
77 down here? 'Cause it will be all weird and angled. Do you want to  
78 see a b-r connection? (7)

Charles status as a novice in this literacy event was evidenced by him leaving out the silent 'h' in the word white. But he was not a complete novice as he correctly identified the more common silent 'e'. His emerging literacy skills were also evidenced when, after listening to his mother break up the word 'with' into smaller sounds, he broke up the word 'spots' into its smaller units of sound. Figure 5.1 presents the sentences that Charles wrote. Figure 5.2 presents the set of letters that Marcie wrote at the bottom of the page for Charles to copy. The collaborative effort produced two sentences about a cat.

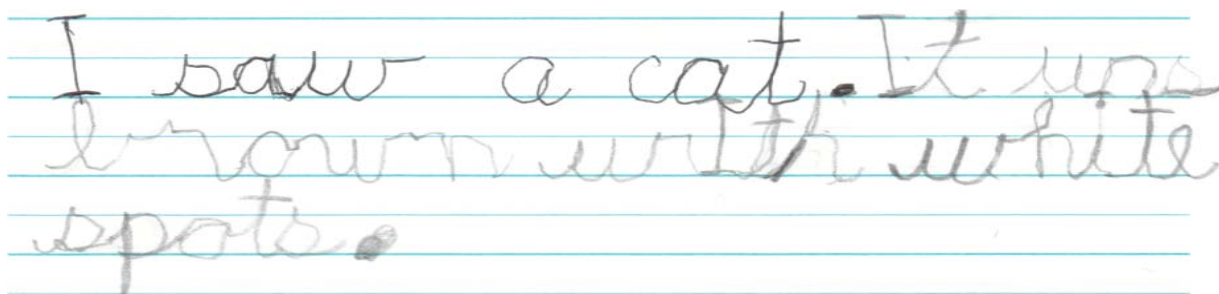


Figure 5.1 (top) Charles' writing sample

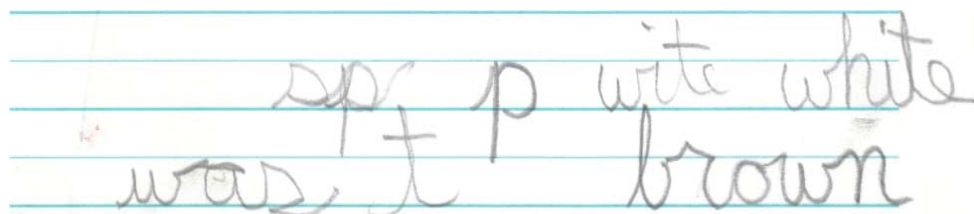


Figure 5.2: (bottom) Marcie's writing sample

Charles's status as an emerging literate was also seen in the grammar lesson that he and Marcie engaged in later that day.

- 2 MARCIE: (to researcher) See, at this point we'd hang it up and go
- 3 outside. (laughs) And run around. (to Charles). Let's do grammar.
- 4 Okay, do me a sentence and give me the noun and verb in it. You
- 5 make=
- 6 CHARLES: =okay=
- 7 MARCIE: =your own sentence.
- 8 CHARLES: Okay. Two ditty heads.
- 9 MARCIE: That's not a sentence. (2)
- 10 CHARLES: Neverwinter or Neverwin or my favorite game is
- 11 Never Winter.
- 12 MARCIE: My favorite game is Never Winter. That is a complete
- 13 sentence. So, what are the nouns in that sentence? (3)
- 14 CHARLES: My.
- 15 MARCIE: Not really.

When Marcie requested a sentence, Charles responded with a fragment. Charles corrected himself, but, when asked to identify a noun, a category of words, he responded incorrectly. Marcie simplified the sentence (from "My favorite game is

Neverwinter” to “I like to play Neverwinter.”) and wrote it on the page, the lesson continued with the sentence written out on paper.

- 15        MARCIE: Not really. Can you think of another thing that’s  
16        obviously a noun in this sentence? How about I like to play  
17        Neverwinter? That’s probably a little easier.  
18        CHARLES: Is Neverwinter a noun?  
19        MARCIE: Neverwinter would be a noun. So come over here and  
20        tell me=  
21        CHARLES: =Noun, Neverwinter=  
22        MARCIE: =what the noun is. [writes ‘I like to play Neverwinter’]  
23        I like to play Never Winter. What is the noun and what is the verb?  
24        CHARLES: Noun [circles Neverwinter]  
25        MARCIE: Noun, there’s another noun in there.

Marcie called Charles to her, and, by sitting next to her he saw the sentence that she wrote. This was consistent with the practice that she described above, about how she taught Charles to read. By sitting next to her he saw what she saw. And, with sentence written down, it became easier to categorize the elements of the sentence, as Charles does at line 24, when he circles the noun Neverwinter. The symbols, words, are now being grouped into the abstract category, nouns, by being symbolized with a circle [Figure 5.3].

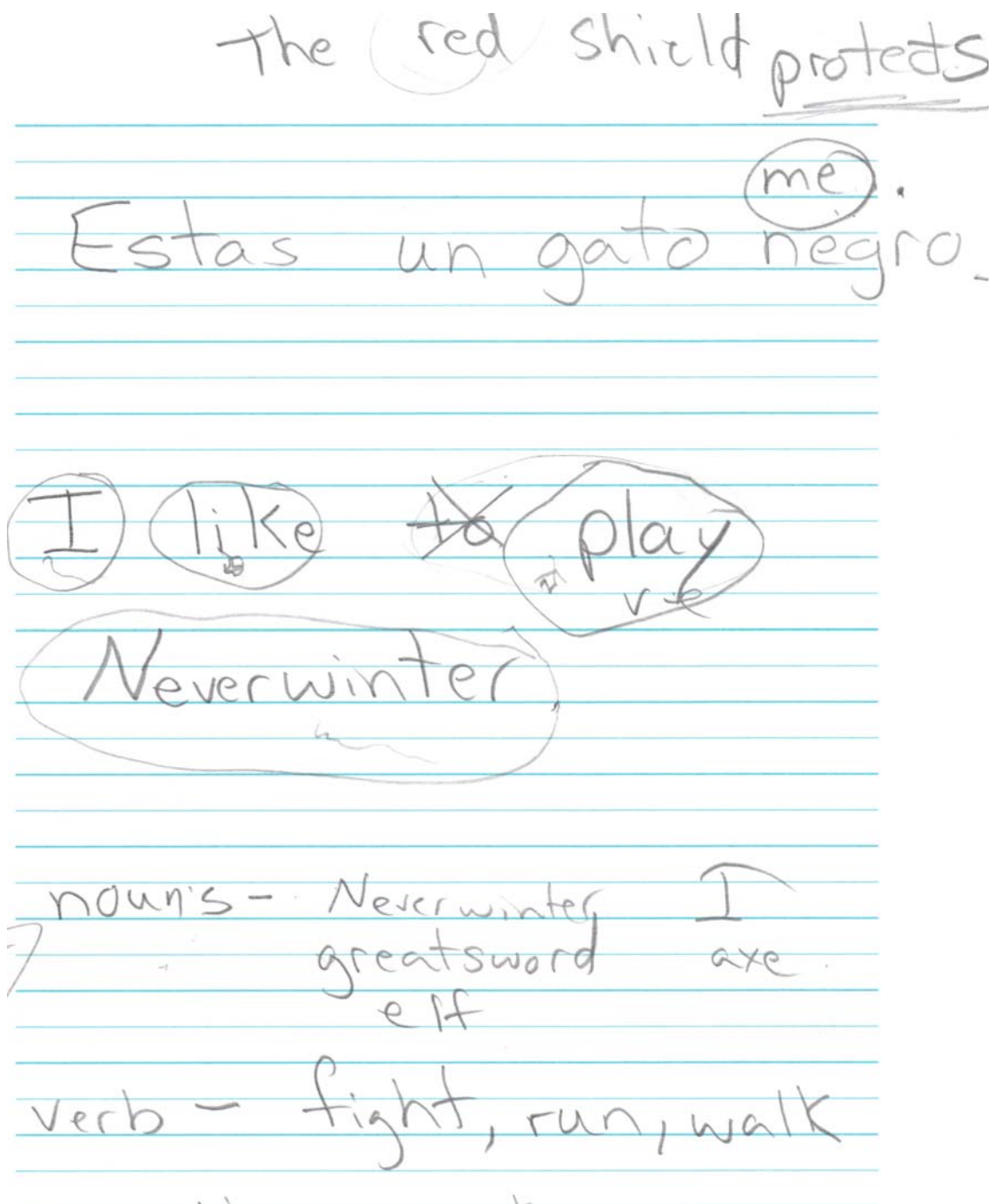


Figure 5.3: Categorizing Parts of Speech

The lesson continued:

- 45 CHARLES: Erase, erase the ones that that are not nouns in the  
46 sentence. Verbs, adjectives.  
47 MARCIE: Okay, okay, that's a fair thing.  
48 CHARLES: To?



49 MARCIE: So we'll erase that. [crosses out 'to'] Well, yeah, to play  
 50 is sort of a combo, so we'll sort of get rid of that. Okay?  
 51 CHARLES: Play, verb.  
 52 MARCIE: Play is a verb, you're right. I=  
 53 CHARLES: =I want to circle it.  
 54 MARCIE: You want to circle it? Okay. So play is a verb, because  
 55 you can do it, right?

Charles continued with categorization when he suggested erasing the words that were not nouns. When Marcie suggested crossing out the word play, Charles spontaneously identified the word as a verb. Earlier he had identified the word "play" as a noun:

31 MARCIE: What do you think the other noun is?  
 32 CHARLES: Play.  
 33 MARCIE: You=  
 34 CHARLES: =play or like or to or I.  
 35 MARCIE: (laughs) Yeah, I know, are we guessing or what?

Now, with the words categorized with written marks, Charles correctly identified "play" as a verb. However, Charles was not consistent with the symbolism, as he suggested circling the word "play", which is the same symbol used to categorize nouns. Marcie questioned this (line 54) but did not sanction him. As the lesson progressed Marcie defined the category of nouns for Charles and his identification of them improved. Here the definition can be seen a tool used to demarcate categories:

67 MARCIE: [writes 'I'] Okay, now think of a noun not in the  
 68 sentence. Remember nouns are a person, place, thing, or idea. And  
 69 idea's the toughest, so let's avoid that for now.  
 70 CHARLES: Greatsword.  
 71 MARCIE: [writes 'greatsword'] A greatsword is a noun.  
 72 CHARLES: That's in Neverwinter.  
 73 MARCIE: Okay.  
 74 CHARLES: Axe is in Neverwinter.  
 75 MARCIE: [writes 'axe'] Okay, let's think of something not=  
 76 CHARLES: =elf.  
 77 MARCIE: [writes 'elf'] Elf is in Neverwinter.  
 78 CHARLES: A dog.

Charles now has the definition of a noun (line 68) and a verb (lines 54 and 55) and categorized words such as fight, walk, and run:

79        MARCIE: Okay, let's think of some verbs. What is a verb? [writes  
80        'verb']  
81        CHARLES: I know. Fight.  
82        MARCIE: Fight, okay, fight. [writes 'fight'] Fight is a verb. What  
83        else is=  
84        CHARLES: =walk=  
85        MARCIE: =a verb? Walk?=  
86        CHARLES: =Run, as in, run, run.  
87        MARCIE: Run. [writes 'run'] What was the word you said before?  
88        CHARLES: Walk  
89        MARCIE: Walk, walk, okay. [writes 'walk']

Later, after Marcie supplied him with a definition of an adjective, Charles identified them as well:

107       MARCIE: Okay, give me an adjective. [writes 'shield']  
108       CHARLES: About the shield?  
109       MARCIE: Uh hu, to describe the shield=  
110       CHARLES: =Red=  
111       MARCIE: =one word, red. Red is a great adjective. So the red  
112       shield, the red shield, what does the red shield do? [writes 'red'  
113       before 'shield']  
114       CHARLES: It protects me.  
115       MARCIE: Protects, the red shield protects. So the verb is protects.  
116       And then the word me, what would me be? Noun, verb, or  
117       adjective?  
118       CHARLES: The red shield protects me. [writes 'the' and  
119       'protects']  
120       MARCIE: The red shield protects me. Now what is the word me,  
121       noun, verb, adjective?  
122       CHARLES: Adjective.

At the beginning of this lesson Charles could not correctly identify the noun in the sentence, as he appeared to guess. However, the lesson ends with him identifying nouns, verbs, and adjectives (although he does misidentify the word 'my', which is a subclass of nouns). He has successfully identified the major categories of speech,

which facilitated with definitions and the use of symbols to categorize them. Charles is categorizing words into specific groups.

The two practices described above (handwriting and grammar lesson) required Charles to use literacy in several different ways. The handwriting lesson required him to analyze grammatical elements of speech (e.g. when to make capital letters and add punctuation) and analyze different words into their constituent sounds in order to correctly spell the words. The lesson also presented to Charles the arbitrary association between the spoken words and the letters that represent the words and sounds that are spoken. The grammar lesson required Charles to categorize parts of speech such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives. The activity was facilitated by writing the sentence down and marking the parts of speech in a different way in order to visually differentiate them. Definitions, which are a tool that organized things according to a common aspect of each thing, were used to help in the process of categorizing. This analysis revealed that these literacy practices in this homeschooling family at this time were requiring skills that were considered to be common to literacy: that literacy makes speech an object of thought, helps organize thought, and aids in categorization, and promotes abstract thinking.

## 5.4 Homeschooling Consequences

It is believed that schools aid the development of autonomy and independence of children by removing children from the home environment where they have developed a relationship of dependency with their parents. Due to the larger number of children in a given classroom, a student's likelihood of establishing a meaningful relationship with an

adult (the teacher) decreases (Dreeben, 1968). With the use of tests, which are taken individually, and the prohibition against cheating students are taught, to a great extent, to be self-reliant and work separately and independently from the other students in the classroom (Dreeben, 1968; Koff & Warren, 1971). Therefore, just as schools promote independence and autonomy, literacy “separates the knower from the known and thus sets up conditions for ‘objectivity’, in the sense of personal disengagement or distancing” (Ong, 1982, p. 46). Therefore, literacy (content) and schools (context) were seen as complementary.

However, in this home, literacy was seen as the key to independence, and not school attendance. The importance of reading as the core of self-learning was emphasized by Derek:

Reading is the key to self education. Reading is vital, you know, to enabling a child to decide what he wants to learn and being able to learn it. And really, honestly, in my book, it doesn't matter what else you educate a kid in for the first eighteen years of their life, if you can foster an ability to read and a love of reading, so that reading is not a chore, not some arduous thing you have to deal with...When they're, when they don't know anything else, when they're eighteen and out on their own and decide they want to do anything in the life, they can pick up a book and read and figure it out.

Marcie noted that Charles consistently reads by himself, each night, before he goes to bed. “Every night he reads for a good hour and I don't consider that homeschooling ... everything, you know history books, science books. He just reads and consumes a huge volume of books every evening. And I forget that that's even schooling time.” In her journal entries Marcie described several of these reading sessions. On Saturday, June 16, 2007, she noted that “Charles read in his room, prior to going to sleep (100 pages) I don't know how long this took him...somewhere between 1-2 hours.” On Monday, June 18, she conceded that it was difficult to “keep track of what he reads at night... so I'm

just going to list bedtime reading as being 1-2 hours of reading whatever he finds in the house.”

Marcie explained that the use of the Calverts’ curriculum is something else that Charles completed on his own. According to a journal entry on Thursday, June 21, 2007, “I just give him the books to read and then have him do the tests.” And, in her journal entry, dated Friday, June 22, 2007, she reported that:

He is working through the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade testing book pretty independently. I tell him to just fill in as many little dots (multiple choice for the reading tests) as he feels like doing at a time – there doesn’t seem to be any part of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade Calverts reading that is problematic for him to just do on his own. For the science, I tell him to practice his printing by filling in the terms from the word box in the correct spot (again, this is just the tests). I never read the science textbook to him; he initiated reading it shortly after receiving it and finished the book within a couple of nights (being out of library books at the time). I told him that if he had trouble with any test that I would go over the relevant chapter with him, but so far he has been correct with everything.

On Friday, June 29, 2007 Marcie noted that

The reality is that he initiates a tremendous amount of educational experiences. He reads A LOT, has a growing interest in writing, and has taken over much of his own science/history/geography etc. education.

Marcie described how Charles’ reading has changed what she does in homeschooling:

It has really changed it. It went from me being really, really focused on teaching him to realizing that I don’t have to teach him a lot of science or history things because I just give him a book and he goes and reads it...So it did change. I think the amount of time I spend focused on teaching him really went down, um, and right now I consider myself a purveyor of knowledge, you know, to hand to him and he reads it.

This description provides evidence for how Marcie’s identity changed in relation to Charles’ change from a novice reader to one with more expertise. She isn’t “focused on teaching” and doesn’t “have to teach him a lot of science or history.” Rather than calling herself a teacher she refers to herself as a “purveyor of knowledge.” Therefore, literacy,

as opposed to schooling, has cultivated the norm of independence. Within the context of formal schooling, the relationship between student and teacher remains relatively the same for at least the first eight years to twelve years. Teachers plan lessons and teach according to the temporal structure appropriate to that context. However, within this home, the development of the norm of independence changed the way in which parent-teacher and child-student interact with one another. According to Greenfield and Bruner (1969), with the development of literacy the individual can “conceptually separate himself from the group; he must become self conscious, aware of having a particular slant on things (p. 653). In a journal entry from June 27, 2007 Marcie wrote:

He said he would be really sad if I had sent him away to public school and he didn't know how to read (I did my best to defend public school and reminded him that his parents both attended it and we are literate!)

He also said he wants to be able to write long stories, and that is why he wants to be a better printer and practice his cursive – or maybe just learn to type as fast as Mommy!

He also said he was working hard to teach Elisabeth how to read so she wouldn't be like some of his friends who couldn't read anything (which frustrates him, as they can't play his games very easily). He definitely sees a difference between his reading level and that of other children his age, but he attributes much of it to his being homeschooled. Any other reason I could think of to give him seemed inappropriate (he would end up interpreting “different ability levels” as “not smart”), so I left it alone. It was interesting to hear, though, that he places such a strong value on reading.

Charles expressed a hypothetical opinion of what his reading ability might be if he had attended public school, his ability to write long stories, and assess the differences between *his* reading and the his sister and his friend's reading.

As described in the previous chapter, an analysis of the literacy practices in this family revealed the Initiation-Response-Evaluation sequences that are characteristic of

classroom interactions. For example, in the Cursive Lesson discussed above we saw the following exchange, as Charles was wrote the word 'white':

- 206 MARCIE: Very nice. Now finish the i and then you go right into,  
207 what is the next letter?  
208 CHARLES: (2) t.  
209 MARCIE: Uh hu. And that goes to the top. Okay, very good and  
210 this should be nice and easy to finish.  
211 CHARLES: [finishes writing 'white'.]  
212 MARCIE: Very nice. That's a very good white.

Later, we saw this sequence when he was spelling the word 'spots':

- 259 MARCIE: Yes, you're right.  
260 CHARLES [writs 'o']  
261 MARCIE: Very nice, now go right up to the t.  
262 CHARLES: [writes 't']  
263 MARCIE: And then spots, one more letter to finish it.  
264 CHARLES: S  
265 MARCIE: You go it. You're in the right place.  
266 CHARLES: [writes 's']  
267 MARCIE: You're getting so good with s's. That is lovely.

The structure of this family is similar to the previous family in there is only one child being educated. Therefore there are no other children with whom Charles competed for attention. Every initiation and evaluation is directed at and to him. Smedley (1992) argued that "given the size of classes, few meaningful interchanges are possible on a given day between teacher and individual student. This contrasts to the home education communication environment...Each child at home has immediate access to the attention of a significant adult" (p. 12). Postman believed that (1994) that the reorganization that reading and writing created a conception of adults as something qualitatively distinct from children. Prior to the proliferation of reading and writing, "everyone shared the same information environment and therefore lived in the same social and intellectual world" (p. 36). Much like the first family in the study, child and the adult shared the

same intellectual world, on a very consistent basis. The attentiveness cultivated within this structure, on both the part of the student and teacher, supported what each of the parents had said about the use of formal evaluations. For Marcie, tests were “a totally new experience for us. Um, reading wise, you know, it was just a matter of can you read. I mean I’ve had a very sequential process of teaching reading so I didn’t move on ‘til the next step until he knew how to do the step before.” Derek noted that

as a homeschooler there’s no real, you know, complicated evaluation process to kind of assess where your student is since you are with them all the time. You just sort of know...you know, one, what you taught them...And, two, you know how easily he handles those things, those skills that you taught him. If he is struggling with one of the things that you’ve been trying to teach him, you continue working on it, you know.

Testing was not necessary when, through the interactions, Charles was constantly evaluated.

That Charles’ began to live in the same intellectual and social world as his parents was seen in another literacy practice that his mother had described. In her journals Marcie described how Charles is reading to his three-year-old sister, Diane.

Friday June 15, 2007:

While I made dinner, Charles read about eight more little booklets. He said he just wanted to read them as he knew I was planning on throwing them away. I don’t know how long it took him...15 minutes? Some of them he read out loud to his sister.

Tuesday, June 19, 2007:

At home, Diane and I were doing a letter based game, and Charles joined in. While I went to cook (about 20 min), Charles evolved the game to where Diane would say a letter and he would make up a long sentence with words all starting with that letter...Near the end of the game I asked Charles to tell me the adjectives, noun and verbs in his sentences....the game stopped for dinner.

In addition to reading with Diane, Charles began to take on the role of being a teacher:



Thursday, June 21, 2007:

He asked to participate in my evening reading to Diane, where I am having her read Bob Books with my help. I allowed him to do so for one book (though he was too hard on her and she got frustrated), and tried to coach him on how to more effectively participate in teaching her to read.

Wednesday, June 27, 2007

When I went to the bank today, Charles took in a Bob Book and sat in the waiting room chair trying to get Diane to read it. He would give her the beginning sound of any words she was struggling with, and kept his finger under the words for her. It occupied them so much that by the time I was through the line they still didn't want to leave...He also said he was working hard to teach Diane how to read so she wouldn't be like some of his friends who couldn't read anything (which frustrates him, as they can't play his games very easily).

Relative to his mother, Charles was somewhat of a novice. However, in relation to his younger sister he was more of an expert. This expertise allowed him to take on the role of teacher. When Marcie described how to teach someone to read she reported that "you go underneath the words with your finger so they know that the little squiggles on the page say something." In her journal she described how Charles "kept his finger under the words for her." However, when Charles was "too hard" on Diane, Marcie "tried to coach him on how to more effectively participate in teaching her to read." This revealed Charles identity as not just student and an emerging reader and writer, but also a novice teacher, with his mother instructing him on the way in which to teach reading.

## 5.5 Summary

In this Chapter I presented an analysis of the second homeschooling family, the Jones. The analysis of the structure of homeschooling revealed a mixture of formal and informal elements. On one hand there was not a specialized time or place in which

education is required to occur, as Marcie said that it happened between 9 am and 11 am. On the other hand there was a weekly schedule that was loosely followed, as some days were reserved for specific activities. Although there were explicit teaching lessons lasting approximately thirty minutes, they were not part of a pre-established, time-regimented schedule as there was a two-hour window in which the thirty-minute lesson occurred. The parents utilized a lot of resources outside the home, such as libraries, the zoo, and museums. Schools typically have libraries located within them, and trips outside the school, during school time, are rare. One outside resource that this family used is a cooperative school which has a set schedule. The family used a curriculum that was divided into subjects and grade levels. However, there was very little explicit teaching based on this curriculum, and Charles worked through most of it on his own. This curriculum introduced into the informal setting formal evaluative tools such as tests and worksheets. An examination of the exchanges between Marcie and Charles revealed Initiation-Response-Evaluation sequences that were indicative of instructional exchanges. Within this informal/formal hybrid literacy practices were integrated. Marcie described how she taught Charles to read, which required an arrangement quite different from the one seen in schools. A handwriting lesson and grammar lesson revealed several tools that Charles utilized in becoming an expert reader: the analysis of words into its component sounds and the use of definitions to categorize parts of speech (noun, verb, adjective). Both Marcie and Derek emphasized the norm of independence as important, and Marcie noted that since Charles has started reading “it has really changed it [homeschooling]. It went from me being really, really focused on teaching him to realizing that I don’t have to teach him a lot of

science or history things because I just give him a book and he goes and reads it.” This reveals the ways in which the identities of the participants of these activities have changed. In addition to this, Charles has taken on the role of teacher and has begun to help his younger sister learn to read.

Both of the families presented here had a homeschooling structure that contains various elements of formal and informal education. The interactions between the parents and children shared certain features of formal education. However, the fact that only one child was being taught in each home made the interactions distinct what is seen in formal schools. The literacy practices involved with each family were similar in that literacy was used to organize thinking, analyzing, categorizing, and synthesizing. In addition to this both sets of parents reported that the children had become more independent after learning to read. In the next chapter I will explore these similarities and the importance they have for understanding the relationship between literacy and informal education.

# Chapter 6

## Cross-Case Analysis

In the two previous chapters I presented two homeschooling families. Specifically, I examined the way in which the families' homeschooling practices were structured and the ways in which literacy functioned within these practices. In this chapter I will explore the similarities between the two families and summarize the answers to the research questions.

In Chapter 4 I presented the Smiths. The interviews and observations of this family revealed a homeschooling structure that contained features that were similar to formal schooling. The participants described, and the researcher observed, that this family had a daily schedule that was organized according to subjects (math, language, cursive, history, etc.). In addition to this there was no explicit teaching during the summer and the subjects are organized according to a graded (first grade, second grade) curriculum. This family also used formal evaluation methods such as tests and worksheets. However, there were elements that were quite distinct from formal schooling. The participants shared different roles: the parent was also the teacher and the child was also the student. The participants had a relationship beyond a teacher-student relationship. In addition there was only one student being taught at a time, which required constant interaction between the participants.

An analysis of the observations, transcripts, and artifacts revealed that within this formal-informal hybrid the family engaged in literacy practices which utilized skills such as writing to organize a lesson on ratios; analyzing, categorizing, and synthesizing perceptual experiences to write an essay about stuffed animals, an essay about the homeschooling subjects, and a thank-you letter; abstracting from and summarizing a story; and evaluating writing. These skills, coupled with the more formal structure of this homeschooling environment appeared to support the hypothesized connection between formal schooling and literacy. An analysis of the transcripts also revealed that the lessons contained interactions that were similar to formal classroom instruction. Mehan (1979) referred to these interactions as “three-part instructional sequences” and they consist “of a teacher initiated request [I], a student reply [R], and a teacher evaluation [E]” (p. 52). These IRE interactions are considered to be fundamental to instruction.

In Chapter 5 I presented the Jones’ family. An analysis of the observations and interviews of this family also revealed a mixture of formal schooling and informal schooling elements within this homeschooling structure. However, this homeschooling structure was less formal than the Smith’s. There was not a specialized time or place in which education was required to occur. There was a weekly schedule that was loosely followed, as some days were reserved for specific activities. Although there were explicit teaching lessons lasting approximately thirty minutes, they were not part of a pre-established, time-regimented schedule as there was a two-hour window in which the thirty-minute lessons occurred. The parents utilized a lot of resources outside the home, such as libraries, the zoo, and museums. The family used a curriculum that was divided

into subjects and grade levels. However, there was very little explicit teaching based on this curriculum, and the child worked through most of it by himself. Prior to the use of the curriculum, the family did not use formal evaluative methods such as tests. The Jones used literacy in similar ways that the Smiths used literacy (e.g., organizing thinking; abstracting and categorizing experiences; and analyzing and synthesizing experiences). The instructional interactions of the two families were similar in that they contained the instruction-reply-evaluation sequence found in formal schooling. Both families also spoke of the independence and autonomy that learning to read and write had engendered in their children. The IRE interaction, mentioned above as being fundamental to education instruction, was also present in this family. Table 6.1 presents a comparison of the homeschooling structures of these two families.

Table 6.1: Structure of Homeschooling Families

| Structural Elements of Homeschooling              | The Smiths  | The Jones  |
|---|---|--|
| Time of Day it Begins                             | Usually begins<br>Between 8:30 and 9 am   | Usually morning,<br>sometimes in the<br>afternoon  |
| Duration  | Lasts 4 to 5 hours during<br>the week;<br>Nothing on the weekends;<br>Nothing in the summer | 30 minutes of “sitting down<br>With paper and pen”;<br>“Year round and<br>all seven days”  |
| Location  | At dining room table;<br>independent reading at<br>table or in living room                  | At dining room table;<br>Some reading activities<br>on the living room couch;<br>Schooling room not set up<br>Because family recently<br>moved |
| Relationship between<br>Teacher(s) and Student(s) | Mother  | Mother<br>Grandmother  |
| Number of Student(s)                              | One student,<br>age 7 years, 8 months   | One student,<br>age 6 years, 2 months  |

Table 6.1: Structure of Homeschooling Families (continued)

|                                      |  |   |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Resources Used                       | Private school website;<br>Public library and museums;<br>Bauer's Well-Trained Mind<br>Graded Curriculum;<br>Attended PALS classes | Maternal grandmother<br>teaches art;<br>Started using<br>PA Cyberschool program;<br>Library and museums;<br>Attended PALS classes |
| Classes                              | Organized according to subjects:<br>Math, Language,<br>Independent Reading and Writing<br>History, and Science                     | No distinct<br>organization of subject<br>matter until use<br>of Cyberschool curriculum   |
| Method of Evaluating Student         | Tests and Worksheets   | No formal evaluations until the<br>use of Cyberschool curriculum  |
| Interactions between<br>participants | Initiation-Response-Evaluation   | Initiation-Response-Evaluation  |

The analysis of the two families presented in this study appeared to confirm the notion that the formal/informal dichotomy is more of a continuum, as both families shared features of formal and informal education (Greenfield & Lave, 1982). However, there were two characteristics that both families shared that were not comparable to formal schooling: (1) Each family had one adult teaching only one child and (2) the adult and child had a relationship beyond a teacher-student relationship.

The families observed in this study also utilized literacy in similar ways. For example, both families used literacy for categorizing: Connor categorized his homeschooling classes according to how much he liked them. While categorizing the homeschooling classes Connor's mother wrote out the categories and circled the elements, thereby visually depicting their new organization [Figure 6.1]. During a lesson on grammar, Ms. Jones circled different words that helped Charles categorized different parts of speech [Figure 6.2].

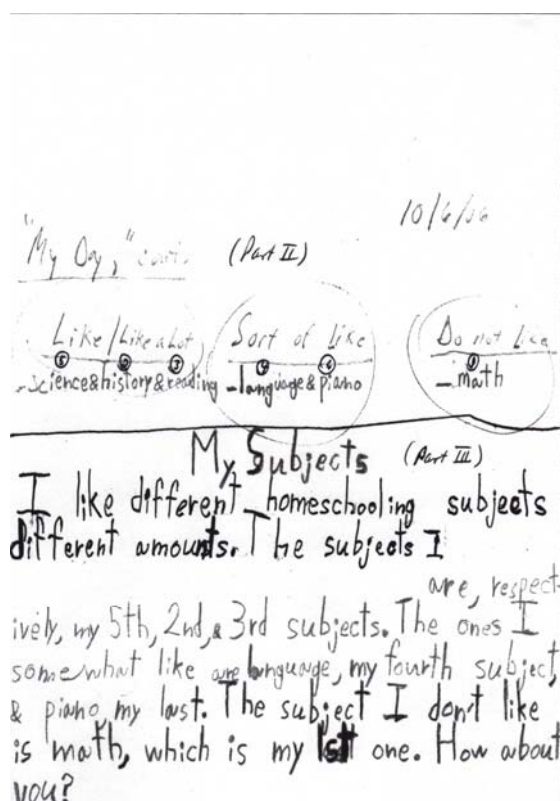


Figure 6.1: Reorganization of Homeschooling Day (above, left)

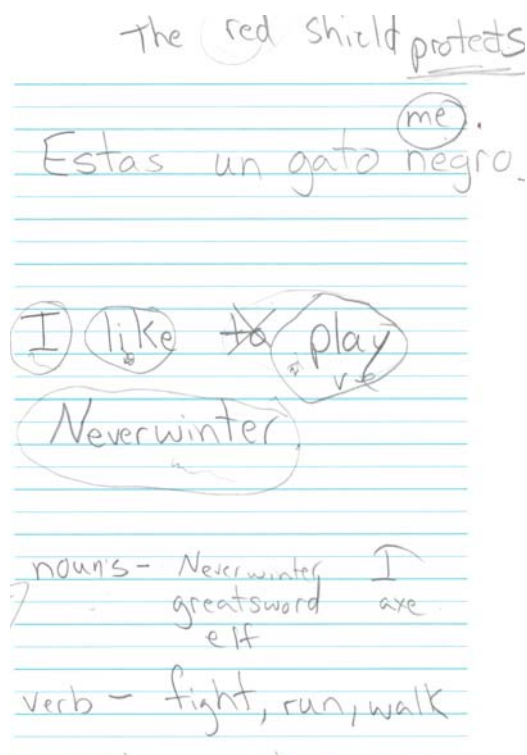


Figure 6.2: Reorganization of Nouns and Verbs (above, right)

In addition to these similarities, both families used literacy as a tool to analyze and abstract. While summarizing a story Connor correctly spelled the word ‘sought’ by comparing it with the word ‘thought’. According to Connor “it’s like thought, but instead of ‘th’, it’s an ‘s’.” This required analyzing the words into their component sounds, recognizing the similarities and differences, abstracting out the differences, synthesizing the old sound with the new sound, and then spelling the word correctly. Similarly, while writing about a cat, Charles analyzed the elements of words into their sounds and their representative letters, when spelling “spots”, “with”, and “white”. Tables 6.2 summarizes some of the literacy practices in which the families participated.



Table 6.2: Comparison of Literacy Practices

| The Smiths   |   | The Jones   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| Practice   | Skill/Purpose   | Practice  | Skill/Purpose  |
| Using written zeros:<br>\$1/100 pennies<br>\$10/1000 pennies<br>\$100/10000 pennies<br>\$1000/etc. | Organize thinking and direct Connor to respond correctly to questions about ratios.   | Using words, circles, and other symbols   | Organize parts of speech into grammatical categories.  |
| Using words, circles, and other symbols.   | Reorganize perceptual experience and create essays about Connor's homeschooling classes, stuffed animals, and a thank-you letter. |   |  |
| Using 'What, when, Where, how, and why' tool   | Abstract main points of an essay and create a summary.  | Using 'Character, Setting Plot' tool to create a role-playing adventure game; Charles' mother introduced the terms 'Mood and Theme' | Abstract main points of a story  |
| Rhyming words exercise   | Abstraction of one sound and integration of that sound into new words.  | Writing sentences about a cat.  | Grammar, which required an organization of speech.   |
| Cursive exercise   | Self-evaluation of written letters.   |   | Spelling, which required analyzing words into sounds and letters.<br><br>Self-evaluation of written words. |

Several of these literacy activities functioned in a way that was similar to what

Vygotsky (1978) had written about children's speech:

By means of words children single out separate elements, thereby overcoming the natural structure of the sensory field and forming new (artificially introduced and dynamic) structural centers. The child begins to perceive the world not only through his eyes but also through his speech. As a result, the immediacy of "natural perception" is supplanted by a complex mediated process. (p. 32).

In the practices described above, the children used literacy as a means of "overcoming the natural structure of the sensory field." For example, Connor reorganized his

homeschooling subjects, on paper, according to how much he likes them, as opposed to

the order in which they occurred during the day. Charles reorganized his speech into categories of nouns and verbs. This was aided by writing the words down and marking the words in a particular way. In the spelling examples both children demonstrated the analytical function of letters and sounds. In contrasting perception with speech, Vygotsky noted that “visual perception is integral” because the elements of a perception are perceived simultaneously (1978, p. 33). Speech, however, “requires sequential processing...making speech essentially analytical” (1978, p. 33). Both children used literacy to spell words such as thought, sought, spots, with, and white. Speaking these one syllable words is an integrated act and the acts of spelling and writing the words is a sequential one. Just as speech breaks up the natural perception, writing breaks up the natural structure of speech.

The practices observed in each of the families also appeared to fit Vygotsky’s description of how a “system of signs restructures the whole psychological process and enables the child to master her movement” (1978, p. 35). While spelling words correctly, summarizing a story, organizing words into grammatical categories, and categorizing the elements of a typical homeschooling day the children utilized literacy to control their own actions in order to find solutions and complete the tasks. For example, the Connor used the ‘who-what-where-why-how’ tool in order to summarize the story. Prior to that, he had responded to his mother’s request for a summary with “I don’t know.” While trying to spell words Charles whispered the letters to himself. His mother used literacy, in this case written letters, to show him the silent ‘h’ that is in the word white. Both of the children used circles to organize their thoughts: Connor organized the elements of his day and Charles organized words into grammatical

categories. Literacy was a tool that both children used to master their behavior and work out a solution to the activities in which they were involved.

In addition to these similarities the parents in both families described wanting to dissolve the distinction between “school learning” and “real-world learning.” According to Ms. Smith, homeschooling did not produce “this great divide between home and learning. And so then there isn’t this great division between book learning and real-world learning.” Mr. Jones reported that “you never stop teaching, I guess, as a homeschooler...we don’t consider it on and off times...you get good, as a homeschooler, finding a lesson in everything.” However, both families made distinctions between activities that were considered homeschooling in the sense that there were explicit teaching procedures, and activities that happened beyond those explicit teaching procedures. According to Mr. Smith, “Connor is a naturally inquisitive child so he didn’t stop learning, he just stopped being homeschooled for a couple months.” Ms. Smith also reported that some reading activities were “part of homeschool, but it’s not. I mean it’s not something that we have on plan. It just happens.” This distinction was also present when Ms. Smith described the two-tiered approach when borrowing library books. Ms. Jones reported that “there is homeschooling that I really don’t realize is homeschooling.” This distinction is important because it indicated that despite the varying mixture of informal and formal elements found in both families, both parents described and engaged in explicit educational activities that are seen as distinct from other activities that occur in the home.

Although both families in this study made distinctions between implicit and explicit teaching practices, the two characteristics mentioned above, a small child-to-adult ratio and a relationship among the participants that went beyond the formal teacher-student relationship, created a context in which the distinction between the literacy practices that occurred within the explicit practice of homeschooling and the literacy practices that occurred outside of the explicit practice of homeschooling is blurred. For example, Ms. Smith talked about how “things [interests] feed off each other” when she decided on the library books that she used in the homeschooling curriculum. Connor may have read something for pleasure, and these books and topics were incorporated into the more explicit homeschooling practices. As mentioned above, studies have compared literacy within the home with literacy within formal education described and found the school’s literacy practices as alienating and pedestrian. However, in the context of these two homeschooling families, having only one student to whom the teacher is intimately connected makes the transition from homeschooling and non-homeschooling literacy less abrupt. The literacy practices revealed a similarity between the explicit homeschooling assignment of organizing the homeschooling subjects and writing an essay about it and the activity of organizing the stuffed animals according to their size. The stuffed animals essay was in Connor’s own journal, which is something that he wrote in apart from homeschooling. Ms. Jones helped Charles write several sentences about a cat which included teaching him spelling, grammar, and handwriting. When I arrived in the middle of this task Ms. Jones said “I am going to start in a few minutes. I told him when you came we were doing his lessons.” However, this practice contained a lesson in the sense that Charles was learning spelling, grammar, and handwriting. Even

though the families distinguished between homeschooling and non-homeschooling learning, the fact that both the parent and child are involved in both of these types of learning made the separation less distinct than what is typically seen in formal schooling. As a result, there is less of a division between the homeschooling and non-homeschooling literacy practices (e.g., library lists and grammar/handwriting lessons). Similarly, Mr. Jones talked about the lack of evaluation process within their homeschooling structure, which he attributed to the fact that, when parents are constantly around their child, they know what their children can and cannot do. And Ms. Jones reported that she did not use tests or worksheets. Therefore, tests and worksheets, which are an inherent part of school literacy practices are absent in this family. Also, in the noun-verb practice described above, Charles named and categorized nouns and verbs that were related to his favorite game. This personal dimension would contrast with the kinds of more general and impersonal examples that he may have encountered in a school book or in a school grammar lesson. As education practices exist on a continuum, literacy practices, too, may exist on a continuum.

Both of the families analyzed here also utilized different genres in their reading and writing. Ms. Jones explained that “every two weeks we get 20 library books” which include fiction and non-fiction. According to Ms. Jones, she allowed Charles “free reign” when choosing library books and he had read a book about doing math in your head and on principles of sound. This family also utilized literacy surrounding playing games, including “directions for a new computer game where he buys and sells chocolate bars for profit.” She also described a “role-playing adventure game” that Charles invented, including “a map and directions to go with it;” a “letter based game”

played by both children where “Diane would say a letter and he would make up a long sentence with words all starting with that letter. Charles also drew step-by-step books.

Similarly, with the Smiths, Connor was allowed a certain amount of freedom when choosing library books. Their choice of books included fiction (Hardy Boys) and non-fiction (The Story of Our Numbers, The New World of Amateur Radio, The World of Ancient Greece, Bionics, and Floating in Space), mythology (The Flying Horse), and poetry (Hey There, Stink Bug). Connor also explored different genres when he wrote. He kept a diary, in which he conversed with the diary as if it were another person. He created a newspaper, wrote letters to people of the past, and conducted an interview with Johnny Appleseed.

Another similarity observed in the families’ literacy practices was the way in which literacy allowed for the possibility for self-evaluation by the children. Both of the children were learning cursive and applied that skill in the different tasks. Specifically, Connor practiced writing the letters D and S, and Charles wrote his story about the cat. Throughout these practices the children evaluated and were evaluating what they produced. Literacy facilitated this self-evaluation because it presents something that can be seen, measured (in relation to the lines on the page), compared (with other letters), erased, circled, crossed out and, ultimately, evaluated. Greenfield and Bruner (1969) wrote that “when names, or symbols in general, no longer inhere in their referents, they must go somewhere; and the logical place is the psyche of the language user” (p. 653). However, in these cases, the place where these symbols went was on the paper. These symbols provided something concrete to evaluate.

Although both formal schooling and literacy are associated with instilling the norm of independence and autonomy, both families mentioned literacy as creating a sense of independence. According Ms. Smith, “well since he can read more, more independently now, there’s sort of...there’s that. He’s more independent...Most of them [the books] he reads by himself.” And Mr. Jones reported that

Reading is the key to self education. Reading is vital, you know, to enabling a child to decide what he wants to learn and being able to learn it...when they’re eighteen and out on their own and decide they want to do anything in the life, they can pick up a book and read and figure it out.

Ms. Jones consistently described Charles’s independence in her journal: “The reality is that he initiates a tremendous amount of educational experiences. He reads A LOT, has a growing interest in writing, and has taken over much of his own science/history/geography, etc. education.” This independence has changed the explicit nature of homeschooling. According to Ms. Jones, “it has really changed it. It went from me being really, really focused on teaching him to realizing that I don’t have to teach him a lot of science or history things because I just give him a book and he goes and reads it...So it did change. I think.” The parents’ descriptions implied that literacy instilled independence. Although literacy and formal schooling were associated in the development of the norm of independence, it appeared, based on Ms. Jones’ account, that reading, and the subsequent independence it engendered, made formal aspects of education unnecessary. For example, the Jones’ were engaging in less explicit instruction. However, the Smiths retained a structure that closely resembled formal schooling.

Another feature of the literacy practices observed in both families was the use of what Mehan (1979) referred to as “three-part instructional sequences” However, due to

the structure of these families homeschooling practices, the IRE sequences differed from the sequences found in classrooms. As mentioned above, one of the structural differences between these homeschooling families and formal schooling was the small child-to-adult ratio. In a classroom a teacher has a large number of students who can respond. What is unique about the IRE structure occurring in the context of these families is that, with only one student present, it is always, already implied, from the start of the lesson, who is to respond and who is being evaluated. There are no other children involved with whom the children compete for attention. Smedley (1992) argued that “given the size of classes, few meaningful interchanges are possible on a given day between teacher and individual student. This contrasts to the home education communication environment...Each child at home has immediate access to the attention of a significant adult” (p. 12). Both of the children had the constant attention of and were required to pay constant attention to what their mothers were saying and doing. In formal schooling, students learn when they can and cannot respond. In homeschooling, the children learn that they have to respond. The student had the constant attention of, and is required to pay constant attention to, what his mother is saying and doing.

In summary, the analysis of the two families presented in this study appeared to confirm notion that the formal/informal schooling distinction is more of a continuum, as both families shared features of formal and informal education. However, there were two characteristics that both families shared that were not comparable to formal schooling: (1) Each family had one adult teaching only one child and (2) the adult and child had a relationship beyond a teacher-student relationship. Both families utilized literacy to engage in practices that required the children to abstract, categorize, and



synthesize their experiences, and to organize their thinking and direct their behavior to solve problems. In addition to these similarities the parents in both families described wanting to dissolve the distinction between “school learning” and “real-world learning.” Although both families made this distinction the two features mentioned above (low adult/child ratio and participants having a relationship beyond a student/teacher relationship) allowed for that distinction to be blurred. The literacy practices within both of these families was important in the development of independence in both of the children observed.

# Chapter 7

## Discussion

The increasing popularity of homeschooling as an alternative to formal schooling has generated questions about, and raised an interest in, the effects it has on the development of the children involved in its practice. One aspect of homeschooling that was examined in this study was the role and function of literacy within a homeschooling environment. Specifically, the literacy practices of two homeschooling families were observed, described, and analyzed. Literacy has been understood as a necessary component of formal schooling (Dewey, 1916/1944; Olson, 1994). However, the homeschooling families presented a unique situation because of their potential to separate literacy from formal schooling. Previously, Scribner and Cole (1981) studied the Vai people in Liberia, who use a script that is not taught in a formal school setting. In that context the effects of literacy and schooling were studied independently. They concluded that:

The most pervasive effects of schooling in our studies were in the ways people handled verbal explanations. We have no reason to believe that skills required to explain why problems were answered in a certain way are fostered by knowledge of a written language (p. 255).

At the beginning of this study it was assumed that homeschooling had the potential to offer a context in which the effects of literacy could be separated from the effects of formal schooling. However, an analysis of the features of the two homeschooling

families that participated in this study revealed a mixture of formal and informal elements which contradicted the assumption that homeschooling necessarily provided a context in which literacy can be completely separate from formal schooling. However, the families shared two characteristics that were not comparable to formal schooling: (1) each family had one adult teaching only one child and (2) the adult and child had a relationship beyond a teacher-student relationship. These two characteristics influenced the content of the literacy practices that were observed and described. These will be discussed below.

There are several possible reasons why these homeschooling families had an educational structure that was similar to formal schooling. First, there is the matter of the legal requirements by the state of Pennsylvania. Homeschooling laws vary from state to state, and Pennsylvania is considered a state with a high amount of regulations (Home School Legal Defense Association, 2009). The state law requires “180 days or 900 hours” at the elementary grade level or “180 days or 990 hours” at the secondary grade level (Home School Legal Defense Association, 2009, p. 1). The content of these hours include specific required subjects. For example, at the elementary level children must have, among other things, “English, to include spelling, reading, and writing; arithmetic; history of Pennsylvania and United States...geography; science; and safety education” (Home School Legal Defense Association, 2009, p. 1). At the secondary grade level children must have, among other things, “English, to include language, literature, speech and composition...world history, history of the United States and Pennsylvania; mathematics, to include general mathematics, algebra and geometry” (Home School Legal Defense Association, 2009, p. 1). In addition to these, when filing

an affidavit with the local superintendent, parents must submit an “outline of proposed education objectives by subject area” at the beginning of the year and “a portfolio of records and materials” at the end of the year (Home School Legal Defense Association, p. 2). Children must also “be tested with a nationally normed standardized test or the Statewide PSSA test for grades, 3, 5,8” (Home School Legal Defense Association, p. 4). These legal requirements introduce elements of formal schooling (e.g., grades, subjects, tests, etc.) into homeschooling.

Beyond the specific legal issues, since formal schooling is the culturally dominant and widely accepted way of educating children, then it also provides the model parents can use when they begin the practice of homeschooling. That is, formal schooling is a readily available template by which alternative forms of education can be judged and compared. Ms. Smith had reported, prior to beginning homeschooling she had researched the website of a local private school “to see what they were covering.” The Jones’ had reported that the cyber-school in which they had enrolled had introduced a graded curriculum and tests and worksheets into homeschooling. Gatto (1992) argued that “it is the great triumph of compulsory government monopoly mass-schooling that among even the best of my fellow teachers, and even the best of my students’ parents, only a small number can imagine a different way to do things” (p. 12). In other words, schooling has become synonymous with education.

The pervasiveness of the formal education model can have consequences for alternative forms of education as well as other institutions associated with education. Holt (1972) noted that

Another consequence of defining education as schooling is that as we put more and more of our educational resources into schools, we have less and less left

over for those institutions that are truly open and educative and in which more and more people might learn for themselves. One example would be the public libraries. In any community, compare the local public library, which serves everybody, with the local public high schools, which serve only a four-year-age span. (pp. 127-128)

Holt's identification of other, more public educational resources is noteworthy considering the consistent use of these kinds of resources by the homeschooling families in this study. Both of the families reported using libraries, museums, and zoos. Ms. Smith went as far to say that it would not be possible to do homeschooling without the use of a public library. In addition to these examples, Connor was taking piano and swimming lessons and both of the families in this study are members of the PALS (People Always Learning Something) home education group. This organization has developed enrichment classes and a curriculum library (PALS Enrichment Programs, Inc., 2006) and both of the children in the study attended classes offered through this program.

These examples supported Dreeben's (1968) notion that "instruction and knowledge, even at high levels of sophistication and specialization, are readily available outside both the school and the household through the mass media, travel, museums, libraries, and personal contacts with a great variety of people" (p. 43). In addition to museums, libraries, and zoos, knowledge and instruction is possible through the internet, cable TV (e.g. Discovery Channel, National Geographic Channel), CD's and DVD's. Publishing companies now package and market curricula specifically for homeschooling families. That these families used resources and engaged in activities outside of the home is significant for several reasons. First, it contradicted the image of homeschooled children as having little contact with the world outside their home. While that may be true for

some homeschooled families, it is not the case with the families presented here. In this respect these families were similar to the family described in Treat's (1990) study of reading and writing in one homeschooling family. She observed that "the learning environment extended beyond the confines of the home. Curricular material was experienced actively in libraries, museums, historical sites, and theatres as well as events tailored to books being read or concepts being learned" (p. 14). While the practice is known as homeschooling, it would be an error to conclude that instruction is limited to the home.

Secondly, the use of resources outside of home may call into question the notion that school attendance is necessarily the best way children can be socialized into the adult world. Dreeben (1968) believed that schools

form one of the several institutional linkages between the household and the public sphere of adult life...From this we can imply that if the education of children were carried on primarily within the jurisdiction of the family, the nature of experiences available in that setting would not provide conditions appropriate for acquiring those capacities that enable people to participate competently in the public realm (p. 65).

The argument is pretty straightforward: Due to their unique structure schools are capable of socializing children into the adult world. School life and family life are qualitatively distinct from one another. Therefore, children who do not go to school, i.e., whose experiences are closely linked to family life, will not be properly socialized into the adult world. The second premise appears to be true: Homeschooling can restructure the social relationships that children have, and these relationships are different to what they would experience in school. (Chatham-Carpenter, 1994).

However, the activities of the families analyzed here raised questions about the first premise, that schools socialize children into the adult world. Children who are

homeschooled are predominately surrounded by adults (Brady, 2003; Smedley, 1992; Shyers, 1992). This can be contrasted with children in formal schools, who are predominately surrounded by other children of the same age. Although the two families presented in this research shared features of formal schooling, they did not share this feature. This, in turn, raises questions regarding what the socialization function of schools really is. Romanowski's study (2002) examined how formerly-homeschooled children adapted to enrollment in public schools and found that the homeschooled children sensed "their maturity level was greater than their public school counterparts" (p. 5). He presented several statements made by the homeschooled students that indicated that the contact with adults, as opposed to other children was the basis for this (Romanowski, 2002, p. 5). If one of the purposes of schools is to socialize children into the larger society, then the practice of insulating them in classrooms with others their own age is a highly questionable tactic.

Rob Reich had stated that "in a home school, a parent can really insulate a child from the vibrant, pluralistic, democratic world" (cited in Cloud & Morse, 2001, p. 50). However, his statement seems to be predicated on the assumption that homeschooled children remain shut away in their houses. This may be true of some families, but it was not necessarily true, as seen in the two families presented here. Interestingly, Gatto (1992) had criticized schools for the similar reason that Reich criticized homeschooling: "School takes our children away from any possibility of an active role in community life...it is absurd and anti-life to be part of a system that compels you to sit in confinement with people of exactly the same age and social class. That system effectively cuts you off from the immense diversity of life and the synergy of variety"

(pp. 14; 27). In addition to challenging the assumption of the socialization function of schools, the homeschooling families presented here also call into question precisely how 'public' public schools really are, given that they serve only a small portion of the public. The institutions used by the Smiths and the Jones are available to a wider segment of the public than the resources located within schools. These families demonstrate the possibility that the experience of homeschooling can be more open and public than the experience of attending schools.

Dreeben (1968) and Koff & Warren (1971) have argued that the norm of independence is something that is children learn in schools. According to Dreeben (1968) formal schooling aided the development of autonomy and independence of children by removing children from the home environment where they have developed a relationship of dependency with their parents (p. 66). However, there are those who have argued that literacy aided in the development of independence (Greenfield and Bruner, 1969; Postman, 1994). The analysis of the two families also provided evidence for the argument that literacy promoted the development of independence. Both families spoke of the importance of literacy in the development of independence in that reading enabled both children to begin to read and learn on their own. Although the homeschooling practices studied here contained elements of formal education, neither of them had a large number of students that would have precluded the children from developing a meaningful relationship with an adult. However, the evidence based on the analysis of these families, where both children have a meaningful relationship with another adult provided tentative evidence that perhaps literacy, more so than the structural features of formal schooling, aids in the development of independence. This



example provides additional evidence that schooling is not necessarily the only institution through which children are socialized into the adult world. Independence is a norm that is valued in this culture. In the families presented here, through the introduction of literacy, this norm was cultivated outside of schools.

The literacy practices observed and described here presented an interesting contrast to the dichotomy between home-based literacy and school-based literacy that was described in Chapter 1. Barton and Hamilton (1998) developed the concept of “vernacular literacies” which are “rooted in everyday experience”. These literacies are learned informally and are typically not separated from use. These were contrasted “with many school practices, where learning is separated from use, divided up into subject areas, disciplines, and specialisms, and where knowledge is often made explicit, is reflected upon, and is open to evaluation” (p. 252). Taylor (1983) noted that, within the family “the direct transmission of literacy styles and values through specific learning encounters occurs less frequently, and such didactic occasions are spasmodic, usually occurring in response to some school-related situation” (p. 7). Knobel (1999) “repeatedly observed sharp differences between participant’s exuberant, intertextual, and often witty language use outside formal classroom spaces and his or her (official) in-class language and literacy production, which was often minimal and usually bordered on the pedestrian” (p. 202). These sharp differences assisted “to alienate school-based language and literacy learning from everyday social and language practices” (p. 203). Skilton-Sylvester (2002) provided a three-year-long ethnographic study of a Cambodian girl in Philadelphia in which “it became quite clear that there was a big separation between school literacy and home literacy... Much of the work students

were asked to do was quite disconnected from their interests and lived experiences” (p.61-62). Romanowski (2002) found that a major adjustment for homeschooled children who entered the public school system was “doing assignments for the teacher instead of doing them for themselves” (pp. 4-5). These descriptions provide evidence that the explicit literacy practices that occurred in formal schools were qualitatively different from the literacy practices that occurred at home.

This dichotomy between school-based literacy practices and home-based literacy practices described above appeared to parallel the parents’ earlier descriptions of school learning and real world learning, which was something they wanted to avoid in homeschooling. Ms. Smith reported that homeschooling did not produce “this great divide between home and learning” and Mr. Jones reported that “you never stop teaching, I guess, as a homeschooler...we don’t consider it on and off times...you get good, as a homeschooler, finding a lesson in everything.” Each of the homeschooling contexts shared similarities with formal schools (for reasons described above). In addition to this, the families did describe homeschooling and non-homeschooling activities. Despite this, there was some symmetry between the practices that occurred through explicit instruction in homeschooling and the practices that occurred beyond the parameters of what the parents had considered homeschooling. For example, the Smith family used the same reading list for both homeschooling subject matter and non-homeschooling subject matter. The homeschooling literacy practice that had Connor organizing and summarizing his homeschooling classes was similar to the non-homeschooling assignment in which he organized his stuffed animals. The skills used in these activities were also used in the practice of writing a thank-you letter.

A similar symmetry was observed with the Jones. The first literacy practice described was Connor writing several sentences about a cat. This was similar to another activity that Ms. Jones described in her journal (dated 6/25/2007):

I initiated a cursive exercise with Charles, as I felt he hadn't been practicing it much lately. I asked if he wanted to do the word lists given in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade testing booklet, but he didn't want to...I tried to encourage that he didn't have to be perfect, and he basically said that another reason was that the word lists were boring and he wanted to write his own story in cursive- not just a boring list of words. I accepted that, and he wrote a three sentence paragraph in cursive. I explained about indenting, reminded him to leave lots of space after the period, and went over contractions for the word "I'm"...I made sure he spelled every word correctly by having him tell ahead of time how he was planning on spelling it.

Rather than use the exercise that was related to a formal schooling structure (worksheets), Charles and his mother opted for a more personalized exercise. Charles had written about playing in the woods, something that he had done two days earlier. In a previous journal entry, dated June 19, 2007, Ms. Jones described another activity that resembled a literacy practice that had been observed by the researcher:

At home, Diane and I were doing a letter based game, and Charles joined in. While I went to cook (about 20 min), Charles evolved the game to where Diane would say a letter and he would make up a long sentence with words all starting with that letter. (Like the silly, sick, slimy snake slithered and swooshed in the stream.) Near the end of the game I asked Charles to tell me the adjectives, nouns and verbs in his sentences. He seemed to like the idea.

The activity of organizing words into adjectives, nouns, verbs developed out of a game he and his sister were playing, and it resembled an earlier described practice when Charles identified nouns, verbs and adjectives. In that exercise Charles organized words from his favorite game (e.g., Neverwinter).

In these examples the literacy practices contained elements that were particular and personal to the family. With the Smiths there was an organization of Connor's

homeschooling subjects, his stuffed animals, and a thank-you letter. With the Jones there was the practice of writing sentences about personal experiences and organizing words based on a favorite game and an activity involving his sister. This personalized learning environment is similar to what Huber (2004) had found in her study of the writing instruction of six homeschooling families. She concluded that “as cultural innovators, customized social units, and educational cooperatives, homeschooling families are position to uniquely integrate living and learning in ways that foster writing development” (p. 11). The families presented in this study integrated their personal circumstances into their literacy practices.

The literature had described school-based literacy practices as “quite disconnected from their interests and lived experiences” (Skilton-Sylvester, 2002, p. 62). The homeschooling families in this study differed from formal schooling in that there was a very low child-to-adult ratio and the teachers and students had a very close relationship that went beyond the explicit teaching and learning routines. In schools, children “may be all different, but in such a class their differences do not make a difference. They all have the same things to do, and they are expected to do them in the same way” (Holt, 1972, p. 11). Postman (1996) defined the “essential task of public schools” as finding and promoting “large, inclusive narratives for all students to believe in” (p. 144). However, in order to do this, the tasks that students do and the narratives they are expected to be socialized into, become less and less personal. According to Huber (2004)

What and how writers write is the composite of the contexts within which they learn, the ways in which they are taught, and the relationships they develop as teachers and learners. Public school students learn in public places. Schools congregate peers who primarily study together; homeschools team siblings and

parents who interact in more than academic ways...Self-educating families reintegrate institutions long separated by the American society: family living and formal learning. (p. 12)

The findings of this research indicate that an advantage of homeschooling is that the specific literacy practices, while utilizing skills such as categorization, abstraction, and summarizing, contain meaningful content that is personally relevant to the participants. Homeschooling may present one possible alternative to the literacy issues in school that were confronted in the literature in Chapter 1, although it is in no way the only solution. Just as homeschooling may fall in the middle of a continuum between formal and informal education, the literacy practices that occur within the explicit teaching moments of homeschooling may exist in a continuum between the home-based and school-based literacy practices mentioned earlier. To the extent that homeschooling resembles some aspects of formal schooling, homeschooling also may serve as a model for formal schooling practices that look to incorporate home-based literacy practices within schools. It is important and necessary to point out that the parents in this study were actively involved with their children's education. This is not the case with all families, including some families who describe themselves as homeschooling.

John Holt (1972) wrote about the peculiarity of places, such as schools, which were set aside only for learning:

Imagine that I am traveling into the future in a time capsule, and that I come to rest, five hundred years from now, in an intelligent, humane, and life-enhancing civilization. One of the people who lives there comes to meet me, to guide me, and to explain his society. At some point, after he has shown me where people live, work, play, I ask him,  
"But where are you schools?"  
"Schools? What are schools?" he replies.  
"Schools are places where people go to learn things?"  
"I do not understand," he says, "People learn things everywhere, in all places."

“I know that,” I say, “But a school is a special place where there are special people who teach you things, help you learn things.”  
“I am sorry, but I still do not understand....” And try as I will, I cannot make clear to him why we think that education should be, must be, separate from the rest of life (p. 117).

Holt’s anecdote highlights the peculiarity of having a place set aside specifically for learning, when people, including children, can potentially learn in most situations. This study and the other studies mentioned above bring that peculiarity into sharper focus. Within the home parents and children can engage in wide range of activities, and these activities provide content for the more formal, explicit teaching sessions.

Holt (1972) also observed that institutions other than schools can teach skills and impart knowledge, but that is not their primary function. For example, apprentices of a shoemaker learn about shoemaking in addition to producing shoes. “Though each of those institutions produced learning, that was not their main task. The shoemaker’s shop was there to produce shoes” (p. 200). By analogy Treat (1990) found that, within homeschooling “the parents envisioned themselves more as readers and writers than as teachers of reading and writing” (p. 18). That is, the primary function of the members of the family in her study, in terms of reading and writing, was to be a reader and writer, which had the secondary effect of teaching the children to read and write. This was similar to the Smiths, who reported no formal reading instruction. Rather, they reported that they had read to Connor “all the time.” They acknowledged that books and other reading materials were readily available and described the house as “a reading household with relatively little, little TV.”

However, the Jones described a very explicit teaching process regarding reading and writing, indicating that it is possible for homeschoolers to see themselves as teachers of

reading. Ms. Jones acknowledged that she and Charles' father were avid readers and that Charles and his sister were surrounded by reading material. It was unclear if they saw themselves primarily as readers or as reading teachers. Ms. Jones reported that when teaching Charles to read she had him sit on her lap or beside her so he "can see the pages being turned in the correct direction and you go underneath the words with your finger so they know that the little squiggles on the page say something." This flexibility of homeschooling was possible due to the low adult to child ratio, which did not exist in the typical structure of formal schooling. Therefore, even an explicit lesson in teaching reading can be transformed given the relationships that exist within the home. In addition to this Ms. Jones consistently described Charles reading to his sister and including her in word games that he created (Journal entries 6/15, 6/19, 6/27) indicating that Charles is more than just a student learning to read. In addition to being a student of reading and a reader Charles is also a teacher of reading.

One limitation of this study is that it only examined two families who organized their education practices that, in many ways, resembled formal schooling. Future research could examine where other types of home schooling programs fall on the formal/informal continuum and literacy and how literacy practices are configured in these settings. For example, unschooling, a term coined by John Holt, is a curriculum-free style of education in which the children's interests control the direction of the education. Therefore, comparing the literacy practices of families described as "unschoolers" with literacy practices in homeschooling is one possible avenue for future research. Also, the families in this study contained one child being educated at a time. This feature is not a common characteristic among homeschooling families, as only

approximately 14% of home schooling households have only one child (Bielick, Chandler, & Broughman, 2001). As mentioned above, the one-to-one adult-child ratio made the function of the interactions distinct from the function of the interactions found in formal schooling. It is possible that the interactions within homeschooling families who are teaching more than one child at a time may resemble the function of the interactions found in formal schooling.

## 7.1 Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the kinds of literacy practices that occur in an informal educational structure such as homeschooling. The analysis of the two families presented here demonstrated that homeschooling is not necessarily an informal structure, as they contained many elements that are found in formal schools. Reasons for this may be the legal requirements of the state and that formal schooling is the dominant education model. Despite the similarities with schools the families shared two characteristics that distinguished them from formal schools: (1) Each family had one adult teaching only one child. (2) The adult and child had a relationship beyond an explicit teacher-student relationship. These two characteristics made the content of the literacy practices personally meaningful and relevant to the participants. For example, with the Smiths there was an organization of Connor's homeschooling subjects, his stuffed animals, and a thank-you letter. With the Jones there was the practice of writing sentences about personal experiences and organizing words based on a favorite game and an activity involving his sister. This was consistent with other descriptions of homeschooling families. Given the dissimilarity found between home-based literacy



practices and school-based literacy practices, certain homeschooling practices, insofar as they integrate formal and informal qualities, may serve as a model to help ease the transition between children who enter schools. Despite the name ‘homeschooling’ both of the families presented here utilized public resources such as libraries and museums. This is consistent with other studies regarding homeschooling, and it raises questions about (1) whether or not homeschooling can be a more public way of education children than schools and (2) whether or not schools provide the best way of socializing children into the adult community.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Transcript for Smith Family (Chapter 4)

1     ***Mathematics Lesson #1***

2     MADELINE: Okay. Hey baby, ready? You know what honey? Oh  
3     that's nice, you got some more done on it. That's great. Leave that  
4     for now, we're gonna switch, that was more just a filler activity  
5     while we had time, so let's get started, we'll do math. We're going  
6     to go over the same thing as last, as yesterday. And we're gonna  
7     do more things with, um, a cash register, and then let's see what  
8     else. Oh and then I have a problem to ask you about Chicago. You  
9     can help figure out how much money we need for Chicago,  
10    alright?

11    CONNOR: Yeah.

12    MADELINE: Okay.

13    CONNOR: Ma=

14    MADELINE: =Right, let me do a full run through, okay.

15    CONNOR: Math is always really hard.

16    MADELINE: Well, you're doing fine with it.

17    CONNOR: I don't like it.

18    MADELINE: I know it's hard sometimes. Okay and then  
19    language, um, oh I know we'll do a story in here and you're going  
20    to tell it to me and I'm going to write some sentences and then I'm  
21    going to dictate them back to you and that will be dictation. And 22  
22    then we'll do a poem and we'll do the letter S. And then for history  
23    we're gonna do The Story of the World, the next chapter story.

24    CONNOR: Can we start with history please?

25    MADELINE: Sweetie, you know what, I want to go in the order I  
26    said so while you're doing this, the handwriting, I can look at  
27    something in history. Okay?

28    CONNOR: Okay.

29    MADELINE: Okay, can you get the cash register, please?

30    CONNOR: Mmm hmm. (19)

31    MADELINE: Okay.

32    CONNOR: Yes, why do you think I dropped it?

33    MADELINE: I don't know. Why did you drop it?

34    CONNOR: I didn't, it was an accident. I didn't want=.

35    MADELINE: =Alright=

36    CONNOR: =to drop it

37    MADELINE: Okay. Okay, can you take a look at the board. What  
38    is, what was the first method we talked about? (2) The different  
39    ways to add money.

40    CONNOR: (3) Add the dollars and then the cents.

41    MADELINE: Okay, can you walk through and tell me what we  
42    did?

43 CONNOR: (3) Use the formal algorithm=  
 44 MADELINE: =Sweetie can you, excuse me, can you go through 45  
 and tell me, walk though the example with me.  
 46 CONNOR: Oh. For example (5) 4.15, Four dollars and fifteen  
 47 cents.  
 48 MADELINE: Uh hu.  
 49 CONNOR: Three dollars and fifty cents. (3) Three dollars and four  
 50 dollars is seven dollars.  
 51 MADELINE: Uh hu.  
 52 CONNOR: Six, fifty dollars, I mean fifty cents and fifteen cents is  
 53 (2) sixty-five cents.  
 54 MADELINE: Okay. You added them separately, the dollars and  
 55 the cents.  
 56 CONNOR: Yes  
 57 MADELINE: Okay, alright. The second one.  
 58 CONNOR: (2) Use the formal algorithm for addition.  
 59 MADELINE: Mmm hmm.  
 60 CONNOR: (2) For example (4)  $5 + 0$  is 5,  $1 + 5$  is 6,  $4 + 3$  is 7.  
 61 MADELINE: Okay, good. Alright, how about the third one 'cause  
 62 we didn't do much of that yesterday.  
 63 CONNOR: First make a whole number of dollars. 9.45 and 7 and  
 64 2.58.  
 65 MADELINE: Okay, and what do we do with that one? (2) That  
 66 was done with the split, remember?  
 67 CONNOR: Yeah.  
 68 MADELINE: Okay.  
 69 CONNOR: Um. Split the 58 and the 2 dollars, that makes it 11.45,  
 70 plus 58 cents.  
 71 MADELINE: What did you split the 58 into and why did you split  
 72 it in that way?  
 73 CONNOR: I splitted it, I split it into 55 and 3, 45 and 55 makes  
 74 100 or a dollar.  
 75 MADELINE: And that's why you made it into 55, right?  
 76 CONNOR: Yeah.  
 77 MADELINE: Okay.  
 78 CONNOR: And you get twelve dollars plus three cents equals  
 79 12.03.  
 80 MADELINE: Okay, good. That's right, good. (6) Okay, I'm gonna  
 81 give you some money, I want you to count it, and I want you tell  
 82 me...for the store items we want to buy.  
 83 CONNOR: Mmm Hmm.  
 84 MADELINE: Okay? (5) One is (8) One is (15) One is (5) and one  
 85 is, okay. Alright take a look at these four things and I'm going to  
 86 give you some money and I want you to match up the items with  
 87 the, um, money. (4) Here's one. Take this money, look how much

88 it is, and see which one of those things it matches that, which one  
89 do you think would count, would cost that amount of money?  
90 CONNOR: Let's see. Fifteen, sixteen, seventeen. (7) I'd say this 91  
one would cost seventeen dollars and twenty-five cents. [points to  
92 paper with "A pair of shoes and a pair of pants" written on it]  
93 MADELINE: Okay, you know what, how about this. Um=  
94 CONNOR: Seventy-five cents, I know that. Seventy-five cents for  
95 a Reese's Cup. [points to paper with "Reese's Cup" printed on it]  
96 MADELINE: Okay. Good. (6) What does that say? [points to  
97 paper with "A pair of shoes and a pair of pants" written on it]  
98 CONNOR: A pair of shoes and a pair of pants.  
99 MADELINE: How much is the money?  
100 CONNOR: 17.25.  
101 MADELINE: Alright, okay.  
102 CONNOR: Sixty cents.  
102 MADELINE: Okay. How much is that one, seventeen something?  
103 [points to play money]  
104 CONNOR: That? 17.25  
105 MADELINE: Okay. And what did you think it was for? A pair of  
106 shoes and a pair of pants?  
107 CONNOR: Mmm hmm.  
108 MADELINE: Maybe, okay. And what's this last one?  
109 CONNOR: This last one.  
110 MADELINE: Mmm hmm.  
111 CONNOR: 20, 30, 35, 36, (9) 36.50 [moves 36.50 amount from  
112 the paper with "Breakfast for family" written on it to the paper  
113 with "A pair of shoes and a pair of pants" written on it]  
114 MADELINE: Mmm hmm. (13) That's nice bud, I saw you  
115 switched those two. Why'd you switch them?  
116 CONNOR: Um because I thought breakfast for the family would  
117 cost less then, less then thirty-six dollars.  
118 MADELINE: Okay, good job. Can you please write down all  
119 those, all those, all the amount of money, and add them all  
120 together?  
121 CONNOR: Sure. That's 17.25 (19) Did you know that one  
122 thousand pennies would be ten dollars?  
123 MADELINE: Really?  
124 CONNOR: Yeah. Because a hundred pennies equals one dollar.  
125 MADELINE: Yeah  
126 CONNOR: And ten times one hundred equals one thousand.  
127 MADELINE: How many pennies for a hundred dollars?  
128 CONNOR: Hmm (7) How many pennies for a hundred dollars?  
129 MADELINE: Mmm hmm.  
130 CONNOR: (5) Ten thousand. Either ten thousand or a hundred  
131 thousand. No, ten thousand.  
132 MADELINE: Can I show you something=

133 CONNOR: =A thousand pennies is ten dollars, so ten thousand 134  
pennies would be a hundred, would be a hundred dollars.

135 MADELINE: I have to write it down to make sure I got it right.

136 You want to work with me? One dollar, one dollar is (4) How

137 many pennies in a dollar?

138 CONNOR: One hundred.

139 MADELINE: How many pennies in ten dollars, you add one zero

140 here and you add one more =

141 CONNOR: =A thousand.

142 MADELINE: You want to do the next one?

143 CONNOR: How many pennies in a hundred dollars? (12) Ten

144 thousand.

145 MADELINE: What about, what would be the next one.

146 CONNOR: A thousand dollars?

147 MADELINE: Mmm hmm.

148 CONNOR: It would be a hundred thousand pennies.

149 MADELINE: Okay good. (5) Want to tell Kevin what we found

150 out yesterday, about the speed of light?

151 CONNOR: Do you know how long it would take, how long it

152 would take light going at its normal speed, to circumnavigate the

153 earth?

154 RESEARCHER: You mean the speed of light circumnavigating

155 the earth?

156 MADELINE: Yeah.

157 RESEARCHER: Um

158 CONNOR: .8 seconds. An eighth of a second, not .8.

159 RESEARCHER: That's fast.

160 MADELINE: Isn't that wild?

161 CONNOR: Because the speed of light is 186,000 miles per second.

162 RESEARCHER: So that divided by the circumference of the

163 earth?

164 CONNOR: The circumference of the earth is 24,902 miles.

165 MADELINE: Want to tell him how we found out? (3) Mind if I

166 tell him? (2) (to researcher) We called the reference librarian at the

167 library. Yeah, they're great um and I had a meeting with the head

168 of the children's section about something unrelated, 'cause we're

169 such regulars there and how they serve the homeschooling

170 community. So that was last week and she was saying you know

171 call us with those sorts of questions we'd be happy to answer. A

172 huge chunk is so important, I mean homeschoolers couldn't do

173 homeschooling without a public library. It is so helpful. (32)

174 CONNOR: (to researcher) This is a times table chart.

175 RESEARCHER: So you made this?

176 CONNOR: Yeah.

177 RESEARCHER: Tell me how it works.

178 CONNOR: Um, this is the one times table, this is the two, this is  
 179 the one, this is the twos and if you go down the one diagonally this  
 180 is the numbers. Do you know how the squares can be four, one,  
 181 just one square or four squares or nine squares?  
 182 RESEARCHER: Hmm mmm.  
 183 CONNOR: Well that's the number of the square. You go  
 184 diagonally down the one, four, nine, sixteen, twenty-five, thirty-  
 185 six, forty-nine, sixty-four, eighty-one, one hundred, one hundred  
 186 twenty-one, one hundred forty-four.  
 187 MADELINE: Now, before we go on the Chicago, I need you to  
 188 add these numbers here.  
 189 CONNOR: [writes down numbers and begins adding them  
 190 together] (1:02)  
 191 MADELINE: How are you doing?  
 192 CONNOR: Good.  
 193 MADELINE: You check it?  
 194 CONNOR: The answer is 52.10  
 195 MADELINE: Really?  
 196 CONNOR: Yeah, 36.50, 17.25, 75 cents, and 60 cents equals  
 197 52.10.  
 198 MADELINE: Can I check your answer, please.  
 199 CONNOR: Sure  
 200 MADELINE: Want to do it with me?  
 201 CONNOR: No.  
 202 MADELINE: To see if I'm doing it right, okay.  
 203 CONNOR: Alright.  
 204 MADELINE: Okay, ready?  
 205 CONNOR: Okay.  
 206 MADELINE: Five and five, write the zero, carry the fifty-eight,  
 207 right.  
 208 CONNOR: Mom.  
 209 MADELINE: Carry the one. Add one, six, seven, eight and seven  
 210 and six, and one carry the two. (3) Two and six is eight and seven  
 211 is fifteen. Five, carry the one. Three and two are five. Want to  
 212 change that one.  
 213 CONNOR: 36 and 17 is fifty-three. No, yeah, fifty-three. 54.10  
 214 and one. 55.10.  
 215 MADELINE: Okay, that looks good. Alright good. (5) Hey, alright  
 216 okay. If we're gonna write this just as cents, how many cents  
 217 would that be?  
 218 CONNOR: Oh my gosh.  
 219 MADELINE: How many pennies would that be.  
 220 CONNOR: Um, five thousand, five hundred and ten cents.  
 221 MADELINE: Okay, nice job. Alright.

1        *Language Lesson #1*  
2        MADELINE: I need my pen. Can you help me find it? (5) Okay,  
3        thank you. Here we go. Lesson 144. Okay, poem review and a  
4        narration of Three Billy Goats Gruff, after I read it, you're going  
5        to, um, you're going to start to summarize. I'm going to write  
6        down some of your sentences and that'll be what you do, and I'll  
7        dictate them to you. Okay?  
8        CONNOR: I'll write them down?  
9        MADELINE: Yeah.  
10       CONNOR: That sounds like a lot of writing.  
11       MADELINE: You can do it. Um, do you want to start with a poem  
12       review=  
13       CONNOR: =Mmm=  
14       MADELINE: =in here?  
15       CONNOR: Mmm hmm.  
16       MADELINE: Want to walk around while you're doing it?  
17       CONNOR: (walks around the room while reciting a memorized  
18       poem) Okay. January brings the snow, helps the skis and sleds to  
19       go. February brings the rain, thaws the frozen lake again. March  
20       brings breezes loud and shrill, stirs the dancing daffodil. (2) April  
21       brings the primrose sweet, scatters daisies at our feet. May brings  
22       sunshine, full and bright, sends the busy bees to flight. (2) June  
23       brings tulips, lilies, roses, fills the children's hands with posies.  
24       Hot July brings stormy showers, lemonade, and lazy hours.  
25       August brings the warmest air, sandy feet, and sea-wet hair. (6)  
26       MADELINE: September?  
27       CONNOR: September brings the fruit so sweet, apples ripe from  
28       summer heat. October brings the colored trees, scampering  
29       squirrels and cooling breeze. Dull November brings the blast, then  
30       the leaves are whirling fast. Chill December brings the sleet,  
31       blazing fire and Christmas treat.  
32       MADELINE: Okay, good. And that is, remember the name of it?  
33       The Year by?  
34       CONNOR: The Year by Sara Coleridge.  
35       MADELINE: Uh hu, adapted by?  
36       CONNOR: Adapted by Sara Buffington. Why two Sara's?  
37       MADELINE: Just a coincidence, huh?  
38       CONNOR: Mmm hmm.  
39       MADELINE: Ready?  
40       CONNOR: What does adapted mean?  
41       MADELINE: Changed, like if you (3) Let's say you're playing a  
42       game with baby Abbie.  
43       CONNOR: Mmm hmm.  
44       MADELINE: She can't understand all the rules that you could  
45       understand. She can't do things as complicated as you can. So you  
46       might adapt it for her, kind of make it simpler for her.

47 CONNOR: Oh.

48 MADELINE: Okay. Alright, you ready to listen?

49 CONNOR: Yep

50 MADELINE: Okay. The three billy goats gruff. Once upon a time

51 three billy goats lived on a hillside. They were little billy goat

52 gruff, middle-sized billy goat gruff and great big billy goat gruff.

53 The three billy goats grazed on their hillside until all the fresh

54 grass was gone. They decided to cross the stream at the bottom of

55 the hill, and go over into the meadow on the other side. There was

56 plenty of fresh grass in the meadow, but to cross the stream they

57 had to go over a rickety, rickety bridge. Under the rickety, rickety

58 bridge lived a huge, ugly, mean, and selfish troll. The littlest billy

59 goat gruff was the first bridge. Trip trap, trip trap went the little

60 billy goat over the bridge. "Who's that trip trapping over my

61 bridge" growled the huge, ugly, mean, and selfish troll. "It is I, the

62 little billy goat gruff" said the little goat in a little voice. "I am

63 going to eat you up" said the troll.

64 CONNOR: I'm not scared.

65 MADELINE: "I'm so little" said the little billy goat gruff. "I'd

66 hardly be a mouthful for you. Wait 'til my big brother, he's much

67 fatter than I." "Be gone, then" snarled the huge, ugly, mean, and

68 selfish troll. The next day the middle-sized billy goat gruff started

69 over the meadow. Trip trap, trip trap went the middle-sized billy 70

71 goat gruff across the bridge. "Who's that trip trapping over my

72 bridge" roared the troll. "It is I, middle-sized billy goat gruff" said

73 the middle-sized goat in a middle-sized voice. "I am going to eat

74 you up" said the huge, ugly, mean, and selfish troll. "Don't eat me"

75 pleaded the middle-sized billy goat. "Wait for my brother, he's

76 much fatter than I." "Uh, be gone then" growled the troll.

77 CONNOR: Actually it's sister.

78 MADELINE: Oh yeah? Wanna make it sister? It says brother here.

79 The next day great big billy goat gruff started across the bridge to

80 join his brothers in the meadow. Trip-trap, trip trap went the great

81 big billy goat gruff across the rickety-rickety bridge. "Who's that

82 trip trapping over my bridge" growled the huge, ugly, mean, and

83 selfish troll. "It is I, the great big billy goat gruff" said great big

84 billy goat gruff in his great, big, billy goat, billy goat voice . "I am

85 going to eat you up"=

86 CONNOR: =I've heard this story about a thousand times.

87 MADELINE: I know. It's a little different each time you listen.

88 The huge, ugly, mean, and selfish troll. And he climbed onto the 88

89 rickety rickety bridge. "Come on then" said the great big billy goat

90 gruff. The great big billy goat gruff ran right at the huge, ugly,

91 mean, and selfish troll and tossed him into the air with his great big

92 billy goat horns. He tossed the troll so far up the river that the troll

never found his way back down. Now every morning the three



93 billy goats gruff trip trap across the rickety-rackety bridge to eat  
 94 the sweet grass or wallow in the fresh meadow. At night they trip-  
 95 trap across the rickety-rackety bridge to sleep peacefully on their  
 96 hillside. Okay. Alright mister. Um, just give me the paper over  
 97 there. Alright I'd like you to tell me, what can you tell me about  
 98 this story? If you were to summarize it, what would you say?  
 99 CONNOR: I would say (4) I don't know. I don't know, mom. (8)  
 100 MADELINE: Remember when we did summaries last week, want  
 101 to use that, that tool.  
 102 CONNOR: The who, what, when, where, why, how?  
 103 MADELINE: Mmm hmm.  
 104 CONNOR: Uh, okay. Who. The three billy goats gruff.  
 105 MADELINE: Can you make it into a whole sentence, like this is a  
 106 story about blah, blah, blah=  
 107 CONNOR: =This is a story about the three billy goats gruff=  
 108 MADELINE: =Okay=  
 109 CONNOR: Who? (16) I don't know.  
 110 MADELINE: This is a story about the three billy goats gruff who?  
 111 CONNOR: Who what?  
 112 MADELINE: You tell me.  
 113 CONNOR: I don't know.  
 114 MADELINE: Okay, well where, where were they? You got the  
 115 who, what about the where?  
 116 CONNOR: Rickety rackety bridge.  
 117 MADELINE: Okay, can you make that, this is a story about the  
 118 three billy goats gruff who, what=  
 119 CONNOR: =oh=  
 120 MADELINE: =about the rickety rackety bridge?  
 121 CONNOR: Who (7) sought fresh grass on the other side of a  
 122 rickety-rackety bridge.  
 123 MADELINE: Mmm hmm.  
 124 CONNOR: Over a stream.  
 125 MADELINE: Mmm hmm.  
 126 CONNOR: But a troll was under the bridge.  
 127 MADELINE: (3) Good. (6) That's great. Okay. What happened at  
 128 the end?  
 129 CONNOR: (2) Hmm (9) Great big billy goat gruff (5) uh (7) I  
 130 can't think of=  
 131 MADELINE: =I'm having trouble, too. What would you call it?  
 132 Big billy goat gruff [punching motion with hand] with his horn.  
 133 CONNOR: With his horns. (2) Hit the troll. (3)  
 134 MADELINE: Mmm hmm.  
 135 CONNOR: So that he never found his way back to the bridge.  
 136 MADELINE: (3) Okay. (4) Okay, did we do, um, the who? Let's  
 137 not forget. Did we do the who?  
 138 CONNOR: Mmm hmm.

139       MADELINE: Did we do the what? (6) Like, what's the main thing  
140       that happened across the bridge?  
141       CONNOR: Yes.  
142       MADELINE: Okay, did we do the where? (5) We talked about the  
143       bridge, the fresh grass on the other side of rickety-rackety bridge.  
144       CONNOR: Mmm hmm.  
145       MADELINE: Okay, who, what, when, did we talk about when?  
146       CONNOR: When?  
147       MADELINE: Mmm hmm.  
148       CONNOR: There isn't a when.  
149       MADELINE: What kind, I'll leave that up to you. Who, what,  
150       when, where, did we talk about why?  
151       CONNOR: Why?  
152       MADELINE: Yeah, like what was their purpose for wanting to 153  
cross the bridge?  
154       CONNOR: Because there was fresh grass.  
155       MADELINE: Okay.  
156       CONNOR: I have that down already.  
157       MADELINE: Okay. This is fine. I'd like you take this, here. (3)  
158       Some dictation. You, my friend will write the first sentence and  
159       then you'll dictate the second one to me and I will write it. Okay?  
160       Please put the date on and write um, just put the date on and then  
161       on the top write chapter or write lesson, you can write L. if you 162  
want. So date=  
163       CONNOR: =L. 144=  
164       MADELINE: =up here. Yeah, and Three Billy Goats Gruff.  
165       CONNOR: Where's the pen?  
166       MADELINE: You can use this.  
167       CONNOR: Never mind, I have one.  
168       MADELINE: Okay (46)  
169       CONNOR: [Writes L. 144, 4/17/08/, and The 3 Billy Goats Gruff  
170       on the top of the page.]  
171       MADELINE: Great, and the date up here, bud. And underline. (4)  
172       Okay.  
173       CONNOR: [Underlines The 3 Billy Goats Gruff] You have the  
174       same thing down on your paper, mom?  
175       MADELINE: I have wiggly, jiggly, only I can read it stuff.  
176       CONNOR: Can I try to read it?  
177       MADELINE: Well, I have to dictate it to you. You can try to read  
178       the second one after I dictate it, cause that's the one you're going  
179       to dictate to me. Okay, ready.  
180       CONNOR: Alright.  
181       MADELINE: I'll read the whole thing one time and then I'll go  
182       back and start again. Okay? This is the a story about three billy  
183       goats about the three billy goats gruff=  
184       CONNOR: =Okay.

185       MADELINE: I'm going to read the whole thing, so just listen first,  
186       okay? This is a story about the three billy goats gruff, who sought  
187       fresh grass on the other side of a rickety-rackety bridge, but a troll  
188       was under the bridge. That's the whole sentence. Ready?  
189       CONNOR: Mmm hmm.  
190       MADELINE: This is a story about the three billy goats gruff.  
191       CONNOR: (5) This (1) is (1) a (1) story (3) about (3) the three (5)  
192       billy (3) goat (2) goats (6) gruff comma (2) and then what?  
193       MADELINE: Who sought fresh grass on the other side of a  
194       rickety-rackety bridge.  
195       CONNOR: Who saw fresh grass?  
196       MADELINE: Uh, it's the verb seek, you know what seek means,  
197       right?  
198       CONNOR: I know how to spell sought.  
199       MADELINE: Okay.  
200       CONNOR: It's like thought, but instead of a th, it's an s.  
201       MADELINE: Right.  
202       CONNOR: Who (3) sought (4) fresh (3) grass (11)  
203       MADELINE: Done?  
204       CONNOR: No.  
205       MADELINE: Okay.  
206       CONNOR: (3) What do I write now?  
207       MADELINE: What do you have.  
208       CONNOR: I have who sought fresh grass  
209       MADELINE: On the other side of a rickety-rackety bridge.  
210       CONNOR: Period?  
211       MADELINE: No. After bridge?  
212       CONNOR: Yeah.  
213       MADELINE: No, but a troll was underneath, but a troll was under  
214       the bridge.  
215       CONNOR: Okay.  
216       MADELINE: Okay.  
217       CONNOR: (35) How do you spell rickety?  
218       MADELINE: How would you guess?  
219       CONNOR: (3) Um, r, i, c, k, e, t, y.  
220       MADELINE: Good. Rickety-rackety.  
221       CONNOR: Rickety make into rackety?  
222       MADELINE: Yeah. (29) How are you doing? You doing okay?  
223       Ready for more?  
224       CONNOR: Hmm (6) Not yet. (42)  
225       MADELINE: More?  
226       CONNOR: No. (11) All done. All done mom.  
227       MADELINE: Okay, can you read this aloud for Kevin.  
228       CONNOR: This is a story (4) about the three billy goats gruff, who  
229       sought fresh grass on the other side of a rickety-rackety bridge, but  
230       a troll was under the bridge.

231       MADELINE: Good, babe. Please show Kevin this page here. (7)  
 232       Alright, can you read this so I, you can dictate it to me. (4) Can 233  
           you read=  
 234       CONNOR: =I'll pretend I'm you, okay.  
 235       MADELINE: Oh, okay, good. Will you be as nice as me?  
 236       CONNOR: Yeah.  
 237       MADELINE: Alright, good.  
 238       CONNOR: (2) And here's your sentence, dear. Eventually great  
 239       big billy goat gruff  
 240       MADELINE: (12) Mmm hmm.  
 241       CONNOR: hit the troll with (6)  
 242       MADELINE: Mmm hmm (2) hit the troll. Hit the troll?  
 243       CONNOR: Hit the troll with=  
 244       MADELINE: =Uh hu.  
 245       CONNOR: His  
 246       MADELINE: Uh hu  
 247       CONNOR: Horns  
 248       MADELINE: Uh hu, you can kinda give me a little more=  
 249       CONNOR: So that he never found his way (7)  
 250       MADELINE: Uh hu.  
 251       CONNOR: Back to the bridge.  
 252       MADELINE: Back to the meadow?  
 253       CONNOR: Back to the bridge.  
 254       MADELINE: Okay. Is that alright?  
 255       CONNOR: Eventually great big billy goat gruff hit the troll with  
 256       his horns so that he never found his way back to the bridge. I never  
 257       knew you wrote cursive this well, Connor.  
 258       MADELINE: [Laughs] Okay, we're done.  
 259       CONNOR: Okay.

1       ***Handwriting Lesson #1***  
2       MADELINE: I'll tell you what, why don't you get started on this  
3       and I'll get you something. Go, work on this and I'll get you a  
4       peanut butter cracker, okay.  
5       CONNOR: Mmm, okay.  
6       MADELINE: Okay, we'll start on the S's, okay.  
7       CONNOR: Uh-hu.  
8       MADELINE: Why don't you grab one of those and we'll take a  
9       look at this. (4) Okay, okay, want to take a look at the description?  
10      Do it with our fingers. Undercurve loop, curve down and up,  
11      retrace, curve right. Ready, on more time. Undercurve loop=  
12      CONNOR: =curve down and up=  
13      MADELINE: =curve down and up, retrace, curve right. Okay,  
14      good. So let's see, this one comes over here, but doesn't quite  
15      touch that one. And that's about half way between the midline and  
16      the baseline. What's wrong with this one bud?  
17      CONNOR: (2) Hmm (3) I don't know. The loop is too small.  
18      MADELINE: The loop is too small, mmm hmm.  
19      CONNOR: The undercurve is too, is a little bit not slanted, but  
20      MADELINE: =Okay, and um=  
21      CONNOR: =And the stroke isn't supposed to cross, like it should  
22      on a G..  
23      MADELINE: Good, excellent.  
24      CONNOR: It shouldn't on the S.  
25      MADELINE: And that's one way you can tell the difference  
26      between an S and a G, right?  
27      CONNOR: Mmm hmm.  
28      MADELINE: Okay, yeah. Another thing watch the general angle.  
29      This is kind of leaning, like the J's for you. So like work, work on  
30      that.  
31      CONNOR: Mmm hmm.  
32      MADELINE: How about this one, what's wrong here?  
33      CONNOR: (4) That?  
34      MADELINE: Uh-hu.  
35      CONNOR: The loop is too big.  
36      MADELINE: The loop is too big.  
37      CONNOR: So is the check stroke.  
38      MADELINE: So is the check stroke, good. How about this last  
39      one?  
40      CONNOR: (3) This (2) oooh, this is too big and the check is too  
41      low.  
42      MADELINE: Yeah, the curve up should be further from=  
43      CONNOR: =Mmm hmm=  
44      MADELINE: =the undercurve, right?  
45      CONNOR: Okay.  
46      MADELINE: Okay, does your S have the correct stance, is the

47 bottom larger than the top? No, yes. Okay, alright, ready to roll. 48  
 Want to sit at your desk to do this.

49 CONNOR: [completes worksheet 2:43]

50 MADELINE: What do you think, how is this one?

51 CONNOR: I think, I don't know. The problem=

52 MADELINE: =I like the angle.

53 CONNOR: They're probably bad because I was using pen and I'm  
 54 used to using pencil.

55 MADELINE: That's okay. That's alright. It's not a bad first try at  
 56 all. I like the angle here. Can you bring that out a little bit more,  
 57 with a big old pelican mouth? Can you bring that one out more?

58 Good, very good. What about that? (3) Nice, good. Very good.  
 59 And this one? The angle, I'm happy about that because I know that  
 60 was really tough with the j. How does it feel doing these ones?

61 CONNOR: Interesting.

62 MADELINE: Are these kind of zoopy looking ones?

63 CONNOR: Mmm hmm.

64 MADELINE: Okay. Alright. Hey Connor, which is your best S on  
 65 the whole, on the whole sheet? Circle your very best one.

66 CONNOR: Hmm (6) You mean the best correction or original?

67 MADELINE: Circle the best correction, then the best original.

68 CONNOR: Okay, the best correction

69 MADELINE: Mmm hmm.

70 CONNOR: Best original.

71 MADELINE: Okay. And remember the difference between the S  
 72 and the G?

73 CONNOR: Yeah, plus with S=

74 MADELINE: =Let me finish what I am saying, please. Um, find,  
 75 one of these here that looks like a G 'cause it's crossed. See if you  
 76 can find that one and correct it.

77 CONNOR: [corrects S]

78 MADELINE: Good job.

79 CONNOR: Hey mom, there's another way to tell the difference  
 80 between the S and G. S is (4) first the check stroke doesn't cross=  
 81 MADELINE: =Okay.

82 CONNOR: And second, with G, it's (3)

83 MADELINE: Oh, it's got another loop back up, huh?

84 CONNOR: Mmm hmm.

85 MADELINE: Exactly.

86 CONNOR: That's G, that's S.

87 MADELINE: Good, okay.

1 **Mathematics Lesson #2**  
2 MADELINE: Okay, good. Alright, ready, practice. Now, we'll do  
3 this one together and then, and then we'll do some other stuff and  
4 we'll do this one. Okay?  
5 CONNOR: Mmm hmm.  
6 MADELINE: Alright, here we go. (2) So, um,  
7 CONNOR: When math over can I show Kevin these?  
8 MADELINE: Yeah, how about when math is over.  
9 CONNOR: Okay.  
10 MADELINE: Alright, let's start with this one. Why don't you read  
11 it out loud.  
12 CONNOR:  $4.40 + 1.60$  (3) 5 dollars.  
13 MADELINE: Okay.  
14 CONNOR: Oh, 6 dollars.  
15 MADELINE: Okay, good. Write it down. Just write...why don't  
16 you do one and I'll do the next. We'll share, okay. Do this by  
17 yourself. Write down six dollars. (5) When you did that, did you 18  
18 add the cents and then together or the cents together and then the  
19 dollars together, or what did you do?  
20 CONNOR: Um, I did four dollars, four and one is five and forty  
21 and sixty is one.  
22 MADELINE: And luckily it didn't come out to more than a dollar,  
23 huh?  
24 CONNOR: Mmm hmm.  
25 MADELINE: Okay. (2) We're not going to use the stuff to the  
26 right to (inaudible) for subtraction.  
27 CONNOR: No, mom, they're addition.  
28 MADELINE: Yeah, but these ones over here are subtraction.  
29 CONNOR: Oh yeah.  
30 MADELINE: Okay, alright let's see. I'm going to do the same  
31 thing. 80 and 15, 95. 2 and 3, 5. So 5.95. (18) Would you like to  
32 me to write my answers and you write your answers?  
33 CONNOR: Yeah.  
34 MADELINE: Okay. Here's yours.  
35 CONNOR: Mine says 2 and 3 cents. (6) 9 dollars and 5 cents.  
36 MADELINE: Good. (3) Did you do the same thing with that, first  
37 the dollars and then=  
38 CONNOR: =Yeah.  
39 MADELINE: Okay. Okay, my turn. 7.75 and 1.45 would be (4)  
40 9.20. Now your turn.  
41 CONNOR: 3.60 plus 4.99. 3.61 plus 5 dollars is 8.61. (8)  
42 MADELINE: Uh. Let's do this one again.  
43 CONNOR: 3.60 plus 4.99. 3.61 plus 5 dollars=  
44 MADELINE: =But you can only do that when it's subtraction.  
45 Remember, what I just pointed out a minute ago. The step to the  
46 right is over here.

47 CONNOR: I didn't say that it was only=  
 48 MADELINE: =I thought you did. Anyway, alright. Use the regular  
 49 algorithm.  
 50 CONNOR: 0 plus 9 is 9.  
 51 MADELINE: Yeah  
 52 CONNOR: 6 plus 9 is 15. 5, carry the 1. (3) 4 plus 4 is 8. How'd I  
 53 get 61?  
 54 MADELINE: You know what, 'cause you used the step to the right  
 55 and that would and so you made that the 3.60 bigger and that  
 56 was...okay, my turn, good. These are going to be a breeze, aren't  
 57 they?  
 58 CONNOR: Mmm hmm.  
 59 MADELINE: Okay 80 minus 45, 65, right?  
 60 CONNOR: Mmm hmm. (7)  
 61 MADELINE: Is that right?  
 62 CONNOR: 80-40 is 40.  
 63 MADELINE: So 80 - 45 would be  
 64 CONNOR: 35  
 65 MADELINE: Okay, your turn.  
 66 CONNOR: 6.55 - 2.50. (2) um. 7.05 - 3 dollars is (8).  
 67 MADELINE: Good, good, okay. So you used the step to the right?  
 68 CONNOR: Mmm hmm.  
 69 MADELINE: Good, good. Um, let's see. (to researcher) We've  
 70 been learning some different tricks for doing, um, addition and  
 71 subtraction that were kind of neat like (to Connor) Can you tell  
 72 him, tell him about the step to the right one while I do this one,  
 73 bud.  
 74 CONNOR: Okay, if you have 6.50 minus 4.99, you get 6.51 minus  
 75 4 dollars, I mean 5 dollars.  
 76 MADELINE: You turn the right number into a whole dollar. Okay,  
 77 your turn.  
 78 CONNOR: 4.30 minus 2.75. (4) 4.55 minus 3 dollars is 1.55.  
 79 MADELINE: Good.  
 80 CONNOR: Your turn.  
 81 MADELINE: Okay, [solves problem]  
 82 CONNOR: (8) What is this circle?  
 83 MADELINE: We are going to use that later. Tomorrow I'll show  
 84 you the circle and say what is a half, what is a fourth, what is a  
 85 fifth? (4) Okay, can you do number 6, please? Do you want me to  
 86 help you with this, or can you do them by yourself?  
 87 CONNOR: I think I can do them.  
 88 MADELINE: Great.  
 89 CONNOR: All done mom.  
 90 MADELINE: Okay, can you check your answers, please. (12)  
 91 Okay, you're all done?  
 92 CONNOR: Yeah.



93       MADELINE: Let's see what you got. (3) Tell me what you=  
 94       CONNOR: =I did the next one.  
 95       MADELINE: Okay, but tell me how you did this one.  
 96       CONNOR: I added 4 and 1 dollars  
 97       MADELINE: Okay, 0 and 5 is 5, 4 and 8 is 2, carry the 1 and 4 is  
 98       5. Good, okay. You read this one?  
 99       CONNOR: Yeah, a pair of flippers costs 6.30, how much cheaper  
 100       is the pair of flippers? 3.70.  
 101       MADELINE: Okay  
 102       CONNOR: It would be 11 dollars if you made it 4.70.  
 103       MADELINE: (4) Yeah, yeah, exactly. And the next one?  
 104       CONNOR: Eric bought a greeting card for 1.85. He had five  
 105       dollars and received 3.15 change.  
 106       MADELINE: Good.  
 107       CONNOR: Mary had 4.25 (4)  
 108       MADELINE: Yeah? (3) Rachel has  
 109       CONNOR: Rachel has 1.95. How much does Rachel and Mary  
 110       have? 6 dollars  
 111       MADELINE: Um,  
 112       CONNOR: 25 and 95 is 120.  
 113       MADELINE: Let's check this one, okay? 5 and 5 are 0, carry the  
 114       1. 3 and 9 is 32, carry the one, good. The next one.  
 115       CONNOR: Joe has 5.60, Jim has 1.75 more. How much money do  
 116       they have? 7.35  
 117       MADELINE: Okay, good. (3) Alright, wanna get your cash  
 118       register for some money games? (1:53) [Setting up cash register  
 119       and information.] Okay, get ready. Today is a special day when  
 120       everything in the world is on sale. Are you ready? You aren't  
 121       going to believe some of the prices. If you've got the money, here  
 122       we go. We have a piano and (3) a piano is  
 123       CONNOR: [plays two notes on the piano]  
 124       MADELINE: 17 dollars and 87 cents. And=  
 125       CONNOR: =I though you said play the piano.  
 126       MADELINE: 17 dollars and 87 cents. And you are selling it, okay.  
 127       So I am going to come up and tell you I want to buy it and you tell  
 128       me if I have enough money and if not, you give me change and 129  
       you count it out, okay?  
 130       CONNOR: Mmm hmm.  
 131       MADELINE: Hi..  
 132       CONNOR: Hello.  
 133       MADELINE: Are you open yet?  
 134       CONNOR: Yes, would you like to buy anything?  
 135       MADELINE: Yeah, um. Is this lamp for sale? (2) No, no, no. You  
 136       know what actually what I'd really like, is the piano for sale?  
 137       CONNOR: Yes.  
 138       MADELINE: How much is it?

139 CONNOR: 17.87  
 140 MADELINE: Ooh.  
 141 CONNOR: This is actually a model rocket it. It lands on these five  
 142 supports.  
 143 MADELINE: Ooh. You know I don't think I'm interested in that,  
 144 but I have a son who might love it. How about if I came back with  
 145 him, later? Okay, I'd like to go ahead and buy the piano please.  
 146 CONNOR: Can you=  
 147 MADELINE: =Can you fit it in my car?  
 148 CONNOR: (3) It depends. How huge is your car?  
 149 MADELINE: Uh, it's a flatbed truck. (6) It's a motorcycle.  
 150 CONNOR: [laughs] Then you definitely can't fit it on there.  
 151 MADELINE: Okay, I'll come back and get it later, but I'd like to  
 152 buy it now please.  
 153 CONNOR: I don't know what a flatbed truck is.  
 154 MADELINE: Oh, if you need to have your car towed. You drive it  
 155 up, roll it on.  
 156 CONNOR: (5) Um, 17.87, out of 20. (7) 2.13. And your change is  
 157 (8) one, two, thirteen.  
 158 MADELINE: Thank you. You know what I'm not very good at  
 159 math. I'm wondering if you could count it up for me, from 17.87.  
 160 Could you=  
 161 CONNOR: =17.87=  
 162 MADELINE: =Yeah, could you count it up that way, so it's easier  
 163 for me to understand? 17.88, like that.  
 164 CONNOR: Okay. 17.88,  
 165 MADELINE: Mmm hmm.  
 166 CONNOR: 89,  
 167 MADELINE: Mmm hmm.  
 168 CONNOR: 90, 18 dollars,  
 169 MADELINE: Uh hu.  
 170 CONNOR: 19 dollars,  
 171 MADELINE: Uh hu.  
 172 CONNOR: 20 dollars.  
 173 MADELINE: Great. Thank you.  
 174 CONNOR: You're welcome. Okay, I'll help you get the piano.  
 175 MADELINE: Alright.  
 176 CONNOR: [pretends to lift the piano]  
 177 MADELINE: You know if you're that strong maybe you could just  
 178 run it over to my house. I live in Butler. Okay. Now I'm going to  
 179 be another customer. You ready?  
 180 CONNOR: Okay.  
 181 MADELINE: (9) Hi, are you open?  
 182 CONNOR: Yes.  
 183 MADELINE: Thank you. Hi, you know what I'm looking for? Do  
 184 you have any cars for sale?

185 CONNOR: Cars?  
 186 MADELINE: Yeah, I'm looking for uh, um a Chevy Prism, 2001.  
 187 CONNOR: Okay, that will (2) can you tell me, there are Chevy  
 188 Prisms. Tell me which one you would like.  
 189 MADELINE: Okay. [Go outside toward the door. Point out a car  
 190 and return after approximately 20 seconds]  
 191 CONNOR: That will be 4 dollars and 68 cents.  
 192 MADELINE: Okay, great, good. I only have five and I wasn't sure  
 193 if that would be enough. I'm glad it's the world on sale day today.  
 194 CONNOR: Oh yeah.  
 195 MADELINE: How much do you think it would be, normally?  
 196 CONNOR: Oh (3) about sixty thousand.  
 197 MADELINE: That would be expensive.  
 198 CONNOR: Our house would be sixty-seven, right?  
 199 MADELINE: Sixty-eight, right. Out of five, then.  
 200 CONNOR: Normally it would be about six thousand.  
 201 MADELINE: Okay, you're confused, right. A new care would be  
 202 much more.  
 203 CONNOR: [13: counts change] Okay, your change is (2) 25, 30,  
 204 32.  
 205 MADELINE: Oh.  
 206 CONNOR: 32 cents.  
 207 MADELINE: Oh, gee, okay. Let's see.  
 208 CONNOR: Four, six. Okay. Four, I'll count out for you.  
 209 MADELINE: Thank you, I appreciate it.  
 210 CONNOR: 4.8, 68, 4.69, 4.70  
 211 MADELINE: 70, uh hu.  
 212 CONNOR: 4.75, 5 dollars.  
 213 MADELINE: Thank you. You know what, I have to put some  
 214 nickels in my nickel parking meter. Can you give me some nickels  
 215 please?  
 216 CONNOR: (2) How many?  
 217 MADELINE: Um, as many as I can get for a quarter.  
 218 CONNOR: (2) Five, ten. (4) Five, ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five.  
 219 MADELINE: Thanks. I want to go down the street, I want to go to  
 220 the clothes store and buy enough clothes for my family for the next  
 221 year for a dollar.  
 222 CONNOR: Today is annual sale day.  
 223 MADELINE: The world on sale.  
 224 CONNOR: Mmm hmm.  
 225 MADELINE: Okay, thank you so much. Can I have the keys to the  
 226 car, so I can drive it away?  
 227 CONNOR: Um, sure. Let me get them.  
 228 MADELINE: Okay.  
 229 CONNOR: [goes and finds a key; returns after 31 seconds]  
 230 MADELINE: Thank you so much. Nice doing business with you.

231 CONNOR: Okay.  
 232 MADELINE: (4) [knocks]  
 233 CONNOR: Come in.  
 234 MADELINE: Thank you.  
 235 CONNOR: Hello.  
 236 MADELINE: Hello.  
 237 CONNOR: Can I help you?  
 238 MADELINE: Yes, I'd like to buy the PPG building.  
 239 CONNOR: That will be 13.42.  
 240 MADELINE: Okay. Um (5) Do I have enough, is that enough  
 241 money?  
 242 CONNOR: That is 10.10=  
 243 MADELINE: =Hmm=  
 244 CONNOR: =You need (7) 3 dollars and 32 cents more.  
 245 MADELINE: Okay. I'll go to the bank and come back. Thank you.  
 246 (4) You know what, I remember I had a ten dollar bill in my car.  
 247 CONNOR: Ten?  
 248 MADELINE: Mmm hmm.  
 249 CONNOR: Um, you need 3 dollars and 42 cents.  
 250 MADELINE: I remember I found 15 dollars in my car. Okay.  
 251 CONNOR: Um.  
 252 MADELINE: Is that enough?  
 253 CONNOR: (3) Just a minute. I have to figure out what the change  
 254 will be. (7) 2.58.  
 255 MADELINE: Great. (2) Count it out for me.  
 256 CONNOR: (5) Let's see (3) 13.42, 43, 44, 45.  
 257 MADELINE: Okay  
 258 CONNOR: 50 (2) Fourteen dollars.  
 259 MADELINE: Mmm hmm.  
 260 CONNOR: (6) Fifteen dollars.  
 261 MADELINE: Thank you. Nice doing business with you. Now will  
 262 you deliver or will I have to pick it up?  
 263 CONNOR: Oh, I think I can deliver.  
 264 MADELINE: Okay. (4) I live on Mt. Washington. Okay. (3) Does  
 265 that come with a warranty?  
 266 CONNOR: No.  
 267 MADELINE: I bet I can buy one. [Goes to hallway and knocks]  
 268 CONNOR: Come in.  
 269 MADELINE: Hi. How are you?  
 270 CONNOR: Good, how are you?  
 271 MADELINE: Good, thank you. Um=  
 272 CONNOR: =Would you like to buy anything?  
 273 MADELINE: Yes, thank you. I'd like to buy, is Chi do you have  
 274 Chicago on sale today?  
 275 CONNOR: The whole city?  
 276 MADELINE: Yes please.

277 CONNOR: Uh yes, that will be 33.32.  
 278 MADELINE: 33.32. Okay, um. Here you go, that should be  
 279 enough (4) Too much?  
 280 CONNOR: Too much.  
 281 MADELINE: Okay, thank you.  
 282 CONNOR: Now I'll give change from these 40 dollars.  
 283 MADELINE: Okay.  
 284 CONNOR: (whispers) 33, 34, (inaudible) (12) I can't think. (15)  
 285 (whispers) Six (13) Sixty. (5) Here's your change. Here's your  
 286 change.  
 287 MADELINE: (4) Oh, thank you, could you count it out for me  
 288 please?  
 289 CONNOR: Sure.  
 290 MADELINE: Thanks.  
 291 CONNOR: 33, 34, 33, 34  
 292 MADELINE: Uh hu.  
 293 CONNOR: 35  
 294 MADELINE: Mmm hmm.  
 295 CONNOR: 40, 50, 34 dollars, 35 dollars, 40.  
 296 MADELINE: Great, thank you. Could I have some quarters for,  
 297 um, the parking meter?  
 298 CONNOR: How many?  
 299 MADELINE: Could I have six of them for a dollar?  
 300 CONNOR: I only have five of them.  
 301 MADELINE: Okay, will you give me five for a dollar? How much  
 302 is a dollar's worth?  
 303 CONNOR: (2) Each quarter is (8) twenty (2) four, for a dollar.  
 304 MADELINE: (4) Alright, thank you.  
 305 CONNOR: Here are three more, if you need them.  
 306 MADELINE: I only gave you a dollar. Should I get those?  
 307 CONNOR: No.  
 308 MADELINE: Thank you, and um, when you deliver Chicago will  
 309 it include, um, the Art Institute, too, also?  
 310 CONNOR: Yes, the Museum of Science and Industry, and you can  
 311 include the water in the Clarence Buckingham Fountain. It will 312  
 also have people, buses, cars, all that stuff.  
 313 MADELINE: Alright. Thank you. Excited about the trip, aren't  
 314 you? Okay, last one.  
 315 CONNOR: Um, okay  
 316 MADELINE: [knocks] Hi=  
 317 CONNOR: =Come in.  
 318 MADELINE: Are you open?  
 319 CONNOR: Yes  
 320 MADELINE: Oh, you know what=  
 321 CONNOR: =May I help you.

322       MADELINE: Yes, I got some people coming over for dinner, but I  
323       don't have a house. Can I buy a, can I buy this house here?  
324       CONNOR: Yes, that will be 14.29.  
325       MADELINE: Okay. (2) Will that be enough money?  
326       CONNOR: That is (2) 10.01. That's 10.01, and it's 14.29.  
327       MADELINE: How much more money do I need?  
328       CONNOR: (4) 4.28  
329       MADELINE: 4.28. Okay I'll go to the bank and ask for more  
330       money. I'll be right back. (6). I'll give this to you ready. 1, 2, 3, 4  
331       CONNOR: This is 3  
332       MADELINE: Oh, really. Is this 28 here?  
333       CONNOR: Let's see. 20, 8, yes.  
334       MADELINE: Okay, and here's the other dollar.  
335       CONNOR: This is five dollars.  
336       MADELINE: Oh, okay. How about that? Is that okay?  
337       CONNOR: 4.28.  
338       MADELINE: Will you deliver it, can you deliver it now, so I can  
339       start cleaning it?  
340       CONNOR: (5) Where would you like it? In this, is that rectangle  
341       that's knocked out the place where the house should be?  
342       MADELINE: Yeah.  
343       CONNOR: Okay.  
344       MADELINE: Hard work, huh? Thank you so much.

1 ***Handwriting Lesson #2***  
2 MADELINE: Alright, you ready? We'll see what Linda says when  
3 she comes, when she calls back and, alright? Um, get yourself a  
4 pen, get yourself ready. We're working on letter (2) D. (4) Let's  
5 take a look at this one first, okay. Hey, bean.  
6 CONNOR: Okay.  
7 MADELINE: What are, what are the strokes you see here?  
8 CONNOR: Hmm, hmmm, um double curve.  
9 MADELINE: Uh hu.  
10 CONNOR: Loop curve down and up, loop curve right.  
11 MADELINE: Good. Can you sh do it in the air with me? (3)  
12 Double, let's say them together.  
13 CONNOR/MADELINE (together): Double curve loop  
14 CONNOR: Curve  
15 MADELINE: Down  
16 CONNOR: And up=  
17 MADELINE: =Up. Curve=  
18 CONNOR: =Curve=  
19 MADELINE: =Right  
20 CONNOR: =Loop. Curve  
21 MADELINE: Right  
22 CONNOR: Right  
23 MADELINE: Right, yeah, one more time. (4) Double curve, so  
24 down one, two. Ready?  
25 CONNOR: Okay.  
26 MADELINE: Say it with me.  
27 CONNOR: =Double curve loop curve down and up. Loop, curve  
28 right.=  
29 MADELINE: = Double curve loop curve down and up. Loop,  
30 curve right. Okay, good. And where does it start?  
31 CONNOR: Right here.  
32 MADELINE: Yeah, what's the angle of this one? (2) Like straight  
33 up and down or (2)  
34 CONNOR: How about like this?  
35 MADELINE: Same slant as usual, huh?  
36 CONNOR: Hmm, yeah, it's not, can I show you? It's not like (7)  
37 [Tape ends]  
38 MADELINE: Exactly, exactly. It's definitely sitting down, leaning  
39 a little bit, huh. Okay, we need page 116. (4)  
40 CONNOR: This is a good D. This is a pointing straight up D. This  
41 is a lying down D.  
42 MADELINE: Like a seal  
43 CONNOR: Yeah, it does. (4)  
44 MADELINE: Oh, Connor, remember yesterday when we were  
45 doing L, I said you know remind me where, when we get to this  
46 point, remind me where the D is because, so we don't, Connor,

47 that's not okay. Do you remember where we said, so where is the  
 48 sheet. I can't find the sheet in here. Do you remember where we  
 49 said it would be?  
 50 CONNOR: (2) Um, I think it's right after L.  
 51 MADELINE: Yeah, it is, so where would it be?  
 52 CONNOR: On the back of L.  
 53 MADELINE: Exactly, can you grab it?  
 54 CONNOR: (3) So you told me I can (?), but you solved it for me.  
 55 That's cheating.  
 56 MADELINE: (4) I'll just give you a hint, okay. Do you know  
 57 what's wrong with these one's bub? I'll let you be the writing  
 58 analyst. What's wrong with this one?  
 59 CONNOR: It doesn't go below the baseline.  
 60 MADELINE: Mmm hmm. What else is wrong? (4) And it doesn't  
 61 float above it either.  
 62 CONNOR: It doesn't, yeah and it goes like down and up.  
 63 MADELINE: Mmm hmm.  
 64 CONNOR: Not  
 65 MADELINE: Okay, what about this one?  
 66 CONNOR: It should be connected and curved.  
 67 MADELINE: Uh hu.  
 68 CONNOR: Like, currrrvveed.  
 69 MADELINE: Uh hu, and this one?  
 70 CONNOR: This one, this one should be small.  
 71 MADELINE: And it should land, it should finish up and back=  
 72 CONNOR: It should finish up but the uh  
 73 MADELINE: (3) top line.  
 74 CONNOR: Yeah, top line. No, head line.  
 75 MADELINE: Head line. Okay, and what about this one?  
 76 CONNOR: There needs to be a loop and not a straight line.  
 77 MADELINE: Right. Okay, good. Alright. So why don't you work  
 78 on this one and when you finish this it will be time for Roman  
 79 Mysteries. Okay, go ahead.  
 80 CONNOR: (24) I'm hungry. Can I have some, can I have a little 81  
 thing to eat, please?  
 82 MADELINE: Not now, we'll have, finish that and you can have  
 83 something while we do Roman Mysteries.  
 84 CONNOR: [completes worksheet for letter D: Elapsed time:  
 85 approximately nine minutes.]  
 86 MADELINE: Easy or hard?  
 87 CONNOR: Easy.  
 88 MADELINE: Is this your favorite one?  
 89 CONNOR: It's my best one.  
 90 MADELINE: Looks good to me. Good, you know what I want to  
 91 tell you. I'm happy this, see on these ones I know sometimes it's  
 92 hard for you to get the right angle to get it actually leaning, now



93 these are actually leaning. Why was it easier for you to have them  
94 lean today than before?  
95 CONNOR: I don't know.  
96 MADELINE: Okay.  
97 CONNOR: You know how the L looks like a triangle.  
98 MADELINE: Mmm hmm. Mmm hmm, yeah neat. And this one,  
99 can you, let's see these look good, well I like this one too. (3) Can  
100 you do one more here, just let me watch you doing it?  
101 CONNOR: [writes D]-12 seconds  
102 MADELINE: Good. Can you do it on top of this one? Try and do  
103 it fast, don't worry, don't worry about it being perfect. Whatever  
104 you can do.  
105 CONNOR: [writes D]-3 seconds  
106 MADELINE: That's it, alright. Excellent. Okay, bud. Can you put  
107 this back up on the bulletin board and we'll do Roman Mysteries?

## APPENDIX 2

### Transcript of Jones Family (Chapter 5)

1       **Cursive Lesson**  
2       MARCIE: (To researcher) I am going to start in a few minutes. I  
3       told him when you came we were doing his lessons, so. [Charles is  
4       seated to Marcie's left, writing, with a pencil, on a piece of paper.  
5       The sentence 'I saw a cat' has already been written in pen.]  
6       RESEARCHER: Oh, I started this. [points to tape recorder] I  
7       thought you were doing something now.  
8       MARCIE: (to Charles) Are you starting a new sentence?  
9       CHARLES: I, I'm doing something about a new sentence.  
10      MARCIE: Because there's a period, um, for a new sentence,  
11      we want to start a capital letter. Every new sentence has a capital  
12      letter  
13      CHARLES: Ooh.  
14      MARCIE: So that's easy 'cause you know how to make capital  
15      letters. (3)  
16      CHARLES: [writes 'I']  
17      MARCIE: I, very good. So what's the sentence you want to write  
18      about?  
19      CHARLES: It  
20      MARCIE: I it?  
21      CHARLES: No I=  
22      MARCIE: =You're writing the word it?=  
23      CHARLES: =it.  
24      MARCIE: Yes, okay. When you're connecting a cursive to that, all  
25      you do is just write a single t. You really don't have to connect it to  
26      the I, it's going to look a little weird because, it will be just like a t  
27      right up against the I. (4) But the t would be little, the t would be  
28      small. Remember how to write small t's? [writes 't' at the bottom  
29      of the page] Up to the top. Oh, my pencil needs sharpening. Down  
30      and across. Okay?  
31      CHARLES: Thank goodness I had a 'raser.  
32      MARCIE: Yeah, an eraser's a safer way of doing it, huh. Okay, so  
33      we're obviously doing cursive first.  
34      CHARLES: No, my stories.  
35      MARCIE: Your stories sound first. Your cursive story?  
36      CHARLES: No, my story's not cursive.  
37      MARCIE: Okay, you're going to print it.  
38      CHARLES: Yeah.  
39      MARCIE: Alright. But right now we're learning some cursive.  
40      CHARLES: Yeah.

41 MARCIE: So you came up, you'll want to come all the way down  
 42 with it. Okay, what do you want to say about the cat?  
 43 CHARLES: It was brown.  
 44 MARCIE: It was brown.=  
 45 CHARLES: =It was.=  
 46 MARCIE: =Great.  
 47 CHARLES: It was brown (3) with white spots=  
 48 MARCIE: =sounds great=  
 49 CHARLES: =like ours.  
 50 MARCIE: You can write that whole thing out if you'd like.  
 51 CHARLES: It's  
 52 MARCIE: Any words you want help spelling just ask. (12). Now, a  
 53 'w' is a weird thing to connect. It's from the very top, you sort of  
 54 shoot out and then you go into an 'a' and of course your 's', which  
 55 you know how to make. (6) [writes 'was' at the bottom of the  
 56 page]  
 57 CHARLES: [writes 'was'] Very.  
 58 MARCIE: I think that turned out quite nice. Okay, it was, and just  
 59 run onto the next line.  
 60 CHARLES: Without doing a period?  
 61 MARCIE: Of course, yeah, it's no period.  
 62 CHARLES: What's that on here? [pointed to a dot on the paper]  
 63 MARCIE: That's just a speck of dust. Yeah, I think that might  
 64 have just been a little bit of dust from your eraser. Now=  
 65 CHARLES: =No, it's not. It was something I dropped.  
 66 MARCIE: Oh, okay. Okay, it was. Now normally you would start  
 67 right on this line right here. Do you want to skip in between? It's up  
 68 to you.  
 69 CHARLES: No.  
 70 MARCIE: Okay. B's, do you remember how to do B's?  
 71 CHARLES: (3) No.  
 72 MARCIE: Yeah B's, B's are our nemesis. Do you want to write it  
 73 by yourself?  
 74 CHARLES: I know how to do B's.  
 75 MARCIE: Okay. (5) Very nice. And, hey you go into an r and  
 76 that's going to be a little tough. Can I connect the b-r for you  
 77 down here? 'Cause it will be all weird and angled. Do you want to  
 78 see a b-r connection? (7) Let me connect for you. Let me do it  
 79 down there. [writes 'br' at the bottom of the page] Yeah, it's so  
 80 tough. B's are just, you're doing a great job making the b. It's  
 81 connecting a B to the next letter, which is just tough. Now watch  
 82 this. You have to be watching. Okay, there's the b, right? Does that  
 83 look like a decent B?  
 84 CHARLES: Yeah. Ooh.  
 85 MARCIE: Yeah I know it's like the r is like sort of a funky slant.  
 86 And then of course we go to the o=

87 CHARLES: =mom, c'mon=  
 88 MARCIE: =which you know how to do=  
 89 CHARLES: =C'mon, c'mon, c'mon.  
 90 MARCIE: You want me to erase it for you or do you want to do it?  
 91 CHARLES: Erase it.  
 92 MARCIE: Me, you.  
 93 CHARLES: Yeah.  
 94 MARCIE: Okay, eraser? There we go. [erases 'br' connection]  
 95 CHARLES: Here's the eraser. Ta da.  
 96 MARCIE: Yeah I know you like the eraser. I'm going to finish the  
 97 word brown here and then I'm gonna let the dogs in. [finishes  
 98 writing 'brown' at the bottom of the page] So, if you need any help  
 99 with brown 'cause it's a letter and, cause the W's also a weird one  
 100 to connect. (16) [Lets dog's in the house. They are big dogs, but  
 101 incredibly friendly] (to dogs) Lay down, go lay down. C'mon, lay  
 102 down. Lay down. Go lay down. Go lay down. Down, stay. (to  
 103 Diane) Diane, having fun? (to dogs) Lay down. (to Charles) Good,  
 104 very good. Yep, alright then go right down and one more little  
 105 hump. (4) And finish it. Very nice. It was brown.  
 106 CHARLES: [writes 'brown']  
 107 MADELINE: Do you want to say more about, is it, do you want=  
 108 CHARLES: =it is brown with white spots.  
 109 MARCIE: Great. Do you know how to spell with? (to dogs) Oh,  
 110 sit, down, down. You guys are going to go back outside. C'mon,  
 111 lay down, lay down, down. (6) They're ferocious (laughs).  
 112 CHARLES: Timber, giant humongous monster.  
 113 MARCIE: Oh I see. It was brown with. Finish the word with. (to  
 114 dogs) Well you guys aren't just =  
 115 CHARLES: =With it.  
 116 MARCIE: With, do you know how to spell with?  
 117 CHARLES: [writes 'w'] Next. It?  
 118 MARCIE: Yep.  
 119 CHARLES: [writes a 'I'] What's it?  
 120 MARCIE: What do you think it is? (5) Yes, with, what makes a th?  
 121 (2) So w-i=  
 122 CHARLES: =The t. (3) [writes 't']  
 123 MARCIE: Uh hu, I see the i. W, i, t, what's left? (7)  
 124 CHARLES: F?  
 125 MARCIE: No, that would be wiff=  
 126 CHARLES: =H. [writes 'r']  
 127 MARCIE: Yes, t, h. (5) You want to erase some? (8) You can  
 128 write it down. Do you want to see me write it once? Oh, you made  
 129 an r. What's with you making r's out of your h's? You're making=  
 130 [erases 'r']  
 131 CHARLES: (to dogs) =woo, woo, woo, woo=  
 132 MARCIE: =Alright.

133 CHARLES: [writes 'h'] Now, that's a cursive K.  
 134 MARCIE: Oh, okay. (5) That's a cursive K. Now what are you  
 135 supposed to be doing right now?  
 136 CHARLES: Oh, I think I know what I'm doing.  
 137 MARCIE: You think so? If you need help, let me know. Okay,  
 138 dogs are going back out. C'mon. C'mon. They normally just go to  
 139 bed. (11)  
 140 CHARLES: But now, with a new person.  
 141 MARCIE: Okay, so, it, it was brown with what?  
 142 CHARLES: White  
 143 MARCIE: White, do you have an idea how to spell white? Okay,  
 144 how do you think it would be spelled?  
 145 CHARLES: w, i, t.  
 146 MARCIE: Well, that would be wit, right?  
 147 CHARLES: (whispers) White. (louder) e.  
 148 MARCIE: That would make sense, w, i, t, e.  
 149 CHARLES: Uhhh  
 150 MARCIE: You okay?  
 151 CHARLES: [begins to write 'w']  
 152 MARCIE: Stop, but that's not how you spell it. (laughs) That  
 153 would make perfect sense. However, sometimes, now watch  
 154 carefully.  
 155 CHARLES: (something indecipherable)  
 156 MARCIE: [writes 'wite' and 'white' at the bottom of the page]  
 157 Yeah, what extra letter did I put in there?  
 158 CHARLES: T?  
 159 MARCIE: You said w, i, t, e, which would make sense, except this  
 160 one has a silent [points to h]  
 161 CHARLES: h  
 162 MARCIE: Yes, some words just do.  
 163 CHARLES: Hu uh uh uh, silent h's.  
 164 MARCIE: So you almost had it right, you almost had it right. But,  
 165 you have to stick in a silent h for the word white. Okay? So, I'll let  
 166 you be. Let me know when you gotten white spots.  
 167 CHARLES: Okay.  
 168 MARCIE: Okay. (2) Oh, by the way if we take a long time with  
 169 this we're going to keep doing the school work in the computer  
 170 time.  
 171 CHARLES: (laughs)  
 172 MARCIE: Let's get this done (laughs)  
 173 CHARLES: (continues laughing)  
 174 MARCIE: You're being rather ridiculous today. I don't understand  
 175 why. I think you're trying to show off.  
 176 CHARLES: (continues laughing)

177 MARCIE: Let's get this done so we go do more fun stuff. 'Cause  
 178 you know what I am going to do? I am going to get your sister off  
 179 the computer once we've done this stuff and we're going to do  
 180 Spanish. (3) So white.  
 181 CHARLES: [begins writing 'white']  
 182 MARCIE: That's nice. That's w, now go right from there into the h  
 183 na na, don't go down. I know, see look at my w, h. W is another  
 184 one of those funky connections.  
 185 CHARLES: [writes 'h']  
 186 MARCIE: Very good. To the top, no loop it on the back. No, no,  
 187 you have to erase that. Let's just do white spots and be done with  
 188 handwriting 'cause you're really giving me trouble with this.  
 189 Okay, now watch, look, look down here. It curves up and then=  
 190 CHARLES: [erases h] =Ahhhh=  
 191 MARCIE: =you come to the backside, come around on the  
 192 backside. (4) And straight down. (2) And then a hump right in the  
 193 middle.  
 194 CHARLES: [writes 'h']  
 195 MARCIE: Very good, go on to the i.  
 196 CHARLES [writes 'I']  
 197 MARCIE: I does not go to the top. Ah ah ah ah. I noticed you did  
 198 that over there, too. You made the i go, you're making like a  
 199 capital I.  
 200 CHARLES: Yeah, but I don't know how to do that type of i.  
 201 MARCIE: No problem, I'll show you. 'Cause it's easier, it's  
 202 easier. It goes, remember this, it goes right to middle line.  
 203 CHARLES: Oh.  
 204 MARCIE: Yeah, see you've done it it's just been a while.  
 205 CHARLES: Oh, oh, ah, oh. [writes 'i'] (4)  
 206 MARCIE: Very nice. Now finish the i and then you go right into,  
 207 what is the next letter?  
 208 CHARLES: (2) t.  
 209 MARCIE: Uh hu. And that goes to the top. Okay, very good and  
 210 this should be nice and easy to finish.  
 211 CHARLES: [finishes writing 'white'.]  
 212 MARCIE: Very nice. That's a very good white. So how do you  
 213 want to finish this sentence? What was the last word=  
 214 CHARLES: =The last word was spot (indecipherable)  
 215 MARCIE: I know, so we got to learn how to do cursive.  
 216 CHARLES: No, I'm actually done doing cursive.  
 217 MARCIE: Okay, that's fine.  
 218 CHARLES: I don't know cursive.  
 219 MARCIE: Well, we're getting there. So how do we want to finish  
 220 this one?  
 221 CHARLES: With white spots.

222 MARCIE: Do you know how to spell spots? I bet you do. (7) Do  
 223 you know how to?  
 224 CHALRES: [writes 's'] (2) p?  
 225 MARCIE: o  
 226 CHARLES: o  
 227 MARCIE: I'm sorry, I do know how to spell spots. How do you  
 228 think spots would be spelled?  
 229 CHARLES: [sounds out p] pa, pa.  
 230 MARCIE: But do you know how to do a p? Can I show you?  
 231 CHARLES: I think I do.  
 232 MARCIE: Okay to the middle now, straight down, straight down.  
 233 And now, let me show you. Let's not get frustrated. So watch. S.  
 234 [writes 's' at the bottom of the page] Now watch this, straight here  
 235 and then straight down and then up and then do it. [writes 'p' at the  
 236 bottom of the page, next to the 's'] Okay? So you have to erase 237  
 what you got. You can't do it that way. (5) There's gonna be more 238  
 erasing. (3)  
 239 CHARLES: Can you help me? I think my eraser is all worn out.  
 240 Can I do a p?  
 241 MARCIE: okay, you want to try a p down here first. We can go  
 242 back to just doing letters if you wanted.  
 243 CHARLES: What letters?  
 244 MARCIE: Well just learning letters, but you were getting bored  
 245 with just learning letters. Okay. Can I talk you through the p?  
 246 Watch, watch my finger. Go to the middle. Here, I'll do it over  
 247 here. [writes 'p' at the bottom of the page] Go right to here, to the  
 248 middle line and then straight down to this middle line, and then  
 249 back up=  
 250 CHARLES: =uhhhhh=  
 251 MARCIE: =and the curve of the p.  
 252 CHARLES: [writes 'p']  
 253 MARCIE: Let's see. Very nicely done.  
 254 CHARLES: Now what?  
 255 MARCIE: What do you think come next? Spots.  
 256 CHARLES: po.  
 257 MARCIE: Well we're doing the letter, tell me.  
 258 CHARLES O.  
 259 MARCIE: Yes, you're right.  
 260 CHALRES [writs 'o']  
 261 MARCIE: Very nice, now go right up to the t.  
 262 CHARLES: [writes 't']  
 263 MARCIE: And then spots, one more letter to finish it.  
 264 CHARLES: S  
 265 MARCIE: You go it. You're in the right place.  
 266 CHARLES: [writes 's']

267 MARCIE: You're getting so good with s's. That is lovely. Would  
268 you like to be done?  
269 CHARLES: Shhhhhhhhhh. Yeah, you finish the story.  
270 MARCIE: Cursive's not your favorite subject. Actually, we're  
271 supposed to do one more sentence, but I think we're going to take  
272 a break from cursive.

**1 Grammar Lesson**

2 MARCIE: (to researcher) See, at this point we'd hang it up and go  
3 outside. (laughs) And run around. (to Charles). Let's do grammar.  
4 Okay, do me a sentence and give me the noun and verb in it. You  
5 make=  
6 CHARLES: =okay=  
7 MARCIE: =your own sentence.  
8 CHARLES: Okay. Two ditty heads.  
9 MARCIE: That's not a sentence. (2)  
10 CHARLES: Neverwinter or Neverwin or my favorite game is  
11 Never Winter.  
12 MARCIE: My favorite game is Never Winter. That is a complete  
13 sentence. So, what are the nouns in that sentence? (3)  
14 CHARLES: My.  
15 MARCIE: Not really. Can you think of another thing that's  
16 obviously a noun in this sentence? How about I like to play  
17 Neverwinter? That's probably a little easier.  
18 CHARLES: Is Neverwinter a noun?  
19 MARCIE: Neverwinter would be a noun. So come over here and  
20 tell me=  
21 CHARLES: =Noun, Neverwinter=  
22 MARCIE: =what the noun is. [writes 'I like to play Neverwinter']  
23 I like to play Never Winter. What is the noun and what is the verb?  
24 CHARLES: Noun [circles Neverwinter]  
25 MARCIE: Noun, there's another noun in there.  
26 CHARLES: To? To?  
27 MARCIE: Mm mm, no.  
28 CHARLES: Like.  
29 MARCIE: No, you're forgetting what a noun is. What is a noun?  
30 CHARLES: Neverwinter.  
31 MARCIE: What do you think the other noun is?  
32 CHARLES: Play.  
33 MARCIE: You=  
34 CHARLES: =play or like or to or I.  
35 MARCIE: (laughs) Yeah, I know, are we guessing or what?  
36 CHARLES: To=  
37 MARCIE: =Okay=  
38 CHARLES: =I, the I.=  
39 MARCIE: It is I. But it sounds like you're sort of guessing.



40 CHARLES: Yes.  
 41 MARCIE: So nouns are=  
 42 CHARLES: =Mom, that that's, oh wait, mom, want to know what  
 43 would be helpful?  
 44 MARCIE: What's that?  
 45 CHARLES: Erase, erase the ones that that are not nouns in the  
 46 sentence. Verbs, adjectives.  
 47 MARCIE: Okay, okay, that's a fair thing.  
 48 CHARLES: To?  
 49 MARCIE: So we'll erase that. [crosses out 'to'] Well, yeah, to play  
 50 is sort of a combo, so we'll sort of get rid of that. Okay?  
 51 CHARLES: Play, verb.  
 52 MARCIE: Play is a verb, you're right. I=  
 53 CHARLES: =I want to circle it.  
 54 MARCIE: You want to circle it? Okay. So play is a verb, because  
 55 you can do it, right?  
 56 CHARLES: That's a verb for now?  
 57 MARCIE: So a noun is a person=  
 58 CHARLES: =And like, adjective?  
 59 MARCIE: No, no, it=  
 60 CHARLES =like=  
 61 MARCIE: =It's another verb, 'cause you're doing it, you're doing  
 62 it. (3) Okay, let me go over what nouns are. Can you think of a  
 63 noun? Just say out loud a noun. [writes 'nouns']  
 64 CHARLES: Neverwinter.  
 65 MARCIE: [writes 'Neverwinter'] Okay, think of another noun.  
 66 CHARLES: I  
 67 MARCIE: [writes 'I'] Okay, now think of a noun not in the  
 68 sentence. Remember nouns are a person, place, thing, or idea. And  
 69 idea's the toughest, so let's avoid that for now.  
 70 CHARLES: Greatsword.  
 71 MARCIE: [writes 'greatsword'] A greatsword is a noun.  
 72 CHARLES: That's in Neverwinter.  
 73 MARCIE: Okay.  
 74 CHARLES: Axe is in Neverwinter.  
 75 MARCIE: [writes 'axe'] Okay, let's think of something not=  
 76 CHARLES: =elf.  
 77 MARCIE: [writes 'elf'] Elf is in Neverwinter.  
 78 CHARLES: A dog.  
 79 MARCIE: Okay, let's think of some verbs. What is a verb? [writes  
 80 'verb']  
 81 CHARLES: I know. Fight.  
 82 MARCIE: Fight, okay, fight. [writes 'fight'] Fight is a verb. What  
 83 else is=  
 84 CHARLES: =walk=  
 85 MARCIE: =a verb? Walk? =

86 CHARLES: =Run, as in, run, run.  
87 MARCIE: Run. [writes 'run'] What was the word you said before?  
88 CHARLES: Walk  
89 MARCIE: Walk, walk, okay. [writes 'walk']  
90 CHARLES: Those three things are in Neverwinter.  
91 MARCIE: Okay, fight, run, and walk are all verbs. An adjective,  
92 an adjective is going to tell us more about the noun, so it's going to  
93 describe the noun. [writes 'adjective' and draws arrow from  
94 adjective to nouns] What is the greatsword like? Can you give me  
95 an adjective about it?  
96 CHARLES: Uh, giant sword that you can not have.  
97 MARCIE: Okay, what would be an adjective? Give me a word  
98 about that sword.  
99 CHARLES: You can't have a shield.  
100 MARCIE: That's not an adjective, though. Giant, giant would be  
101 an adjective. Sharp would be an adjective. [writes 'giant', 'sharp']  
102 CHARLES: All of them are sharp.  
103 MARCIE: The point is that adjectives is something that describes a  
104 noun, okay? Okay? This shield, if I hold up this shield, is the word  
105 shield a noun, a verb, or an adjective?  
106 CHARLES: Noun.  
107 MARCIE: Okay, give me an adjective. [writes 'shield']  
108 CHARLES: About the shield?  
109 MARCIE: Uh hu, to describe the shield=  
110 CHARLES: =Red=  
111 MARCIE: =one word, red. Red is a great adjective. So the red  
112 shield, the red shield, what does the red shield do? [writes 'red'  
113 before 'shield']  
114 CHARLES: It protects me.  
115 MARCIE: Protects, the red shield protects. So the verb is protects.  
116 And then the word me, what would me be? Noun, verb, or  
117 adjective?  
118 CHARLES: The red shield protects me. [writes 'the' and  
119 'protects']  
120 MARCIE: The red shield protects me. Now what is the word me,  
121 noun, verb, adjective?  
122 CHARLES: Adjective.  
123 MARCIE: You are a person. You'd be a noun. So we have red  
124 adjective describing the noun shield, protects is the verb and then  
125 we use another noun. Is that it?  
126 CHARLES: Yeah.  
127 MARCIE: Good.  
128 CHARLES: I'm gonna play.  
129 MARCIE: Are we allowed to be done?

## APPENDIX 3

### Observations on Charles' Reading

#### Friday 6/15/07

During your observation time I asked Charles to read a small story, some Spanish words etc. I instigated this to facilitate the observation.

While I made dinner, Charles read about 8 more little booklets (the same size as the one he read when you were here). He said he just wanted to read them as he knew I was planning on throwing them away. I don't know how long it took him... 15 minutes? Some of them he read out loud to his sister.

In the evening, in his room, Charles read an entire Berenstain Bear chapter book (about 100 pages of easy text), and almost an entire "American Girl" book. He said he fell asleep before finishing the American Girl book.

#### Saturday 6/16/07

We went to Kennywood and Charles read any sign or direction that needed reading. Rather than telling him "don't wade in the fountain" for example, we would suggest he read the signs. He carefully read all about the height requirements as he now qualifies for bigger rides!

I read the first chapter of "Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle's Magic" (eight pages of dense text). This occurred in the living room prior to Charles going to bed. I instigated it as it is our tradition. This took about 10 minutes.

Charles read in his room, prior to going to sleep, most of the rest of the Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle book that I had started earlier (about 100 pgs.). I don't know how long this took him... somewhere between 1-2 hours.

#### Sunday 6/17/07

Early afternoon, after we returned from church, Charles asked to play a computer game that is reading intensive. Game requires choosing appropriate sentence responses to questions. Charles had previously figured out how to use the game by reading all the directions. Played about 1 hour.

Bedtime Reading: Reread some chapters from Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle. Read through a math book that discusses how to do math in your head. The math book was from the library, and now that Charles is running out of new library books to read he is reading the more "educational" ones out of boredom and desperation. He has begun complaining that he has nothing to read.

### Monday 6/18/07

Charles was at my Mother's house most of the day. While there he filled in one reading/science/writing test for 2<sup>nd</sup> grade (every 20<sup>th</sup> Calvert lesson has one-which is meant to be one per mth). He had previously read the Calvert science book during one of his bedtime reading times. Mom said the whole thing took about 10-15 minutes.

Bedtime Reading: It's being too hard to keep track of what he reads at night... so I'm just going to list Bedtime reading as being 1-2 hours of reading whatever he finds in the house. Every two weeks I get 20 library books. 5 of those books are appropriate for Diane (little kid picture books), 5 of those books are non-fiction reading appropriate for Charles, and the other 10 books are chapter books of some kind that are within Charles' reading level. He reads them at night (typically the 10 fiction get read first) and then out of boredom he reads the other 10 books. I purposely don't get him enough fiction novels to last the 2 weeks, as he reads a lot of "educational" material when he doesn't have anything else to read. I don't much monitor what he reads or when, but it's the rare book he dislikes enough not to bother reading it before we have to turn them back in. We also have a ton of kids books in the house (the hallway between the 2 kids' rooms is full of kid books & drawing paper/pens), but Charles doesn't much like rereading books unless a lot of time has passed.

### Tuesday 6/19/07

Charles was at my Mother's house much of the day. They didn't do any reading or writing there, but Charles did about 1-2 hours of drawing (he likes her "how to draw step-by-step" books). I don't know if drawing is considered a literacy skill, but I think it helps penmanship.

At home, Diane and I were doing a letter based game, and Charles joined in. While I went to cook (about 20 min), Charles evolved the game to where Diane would say a letter and he would make up a long sentence with words all starting with that letter. (Like the silly, sick, slimy snake slithered and swooshed in the stream.) Near the end of the game I asked Charles to tell me the adjectives, noun and verbs in his sentences. He seemed to like the idea. The game stopped for dinner.

Bedtime Reading as normal. Oh, and I read him a chapter in the Hardy Boys, as it is the book he is currently reading and it is pushing his reading level for difficulty. But at my suggestion that it might be too hard and that he might not want to read it, he vehemently disagreed and took it to bed with him.

### Wednesday 6/20/07

We drove to the PA Cyber location in Midland to have Charles tested for the gifted program (because he is about 2 grade levels ahead of his age, the Cyberschool had requested the test). He scored in the top 1-2% in every category related to language. The psychologist said he had an excellent vocabulary, but more importantly did very well at "word relationships"... whatever that means! I think his spelling was the only "low" verbal score, and was still above average (I think around 70% percentile). We've never done any spelling tests or guided spelling exercises (other than my telling him how to

spell and how to sound out words he asks me about), so I was somewhat surprised to know he was above average in that area. The tester said Charles had asked to do all the spelling words in cursive, because he wanted to practice it more (he can print just fine – but cursive is new).

Bedtime Reading as normal. I didn't read to him as he had misbehaved earlier and he had lost that for the night. He does occasionally get grounded (for one day) from things like the computer and my reading to him at bedtime. He doesn't ever get grounded from being allowed to read himself.

#### Thursday 6/21/07

Kids were at my mother's most of the day (this is really unusual for my mother to babysit all day -it is because I'm editing a book, which happens about 2-4 times per year). He filled in another test section for Calverts (minus the cursive test-which he didn't want to do) which took about 10 minutes. These tests are to complete 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and we send them to PA Cyber. We are not really doing all the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade work, as it doesn't seem to be required... I just give him the books to read and then have him do the tests. He had previously turned in all of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade math, but the writing sections in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade tests are hard for him (due to his cursive and spelling abilities still being a challenge).

He played a computer game – Nancy Drew. This requires a lot of reading and telling the game what Nancy is going to say to talk to her suspects. He asked to play and played about 2 hours.

He asked to participate in my evening reading to Diane, where I am having her read Bob Books with my help. I allowed him to do so for one book (though he was too hard on her and she got frustrated), and tried to coach him on how to more effectively participate in teaching her to read. He did his own bedtime reading as normal, after Dad read to him.

#### Friday 6/22/07

Charles made up his own game... and made a map and "directions" to go with it. He initiated the activity while I was working on my book. Some of his directions were written out words, other parts entailed the first letter of words being an "abbreviation" for the word. The game was a role-playing adventure game and he used words like character/setting/plot in his description. I introduced the terms of mood and theme to him – he decided his theme was a mystery and the mood of his game was creepy. He worked on the game, off and on, for about two hours.

He is working through the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade testing book pretty independently. I tell him to just fill in as many little dots (multiple choice for the reading tests) as he feels like doing at a time – there doesn't seem to be any part of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade Calverts reading that is problematic for him to just do on his own. For the science, I tell him to practice his printing by filling in the terms from the word box in the correct spot (again, this is just the tests). I never read the science textbook to him; he initiated reading it shortly after

receiving it and finished the book within a couple of nights (being out of library books at the time). I told him that if he had trouble with any test that I would go over the relevant chapter with him, but so far he has been correct with everything. Today he pointed out that he really didn't KNOW the answers to a couple of the questions, but that there was only one way the words could fit into the sentences based on how the wording was set up. He was right... one term was plural, and the grammar of the sentence clearly indicated a plural word. While I applauded his text taking skills, I questioned if he wanted to learn more about the topic (sound: the terms pitch, vibration etc was covered) and he asked me to get him a separate book on the subject the next time we go to the library; he didn't want to reread the Calvert's science text, and I agreed that he didn't have to as he had correctly completed the test.

#### Saturday 6/23/07

I have no idea what the child did all day – Dad took them out to play in the park so that I could keep working on my book. I don't think he read anything, as they were in a forest most of the day. That night I'm sure he read books like normal.

#### Sunday 6/24/07

We went to the library to grab books. While I found the 20 kids books, Charles read a handful of easy picture books (while Diane played on the computer), then he reviewed the fiction books that I had picked out and chose a couple of non-fiction from the appropriate areas. I have a pattern for choosing the books (described on 6/18) and I always give Charles free reign in deciding what non-fiction subjects he wants to pursue. Today I reminded him that he had been interested in "Sound," and I helped him pick out an age appropriate book on the subject. He asked to stay longer so he could read more, and I gave them both an extra 15 minutes (as I had other errands I had to get done). I no longer get picture books for him (other than the 5 for Diane), so he always wants to read as many as he can while we are there... and Diane loves the computer games. I don't get the picture books simply because it is impractical to do so – he can read one in about 5 minutes. Since we only go to the library every two weeks due to the drive, and we are only allowed 20 books per time, getting chapter books is obviously the way to go. We long ago realized that our local library is terrible, and doesn't prioritize children reading (a long rant lies behind this!) so we have to drive a good ways to find a large enough children's selection to keep us going.

#### Monday 6/25/07

I initiated a cursive exercise with Charles, as I felt he hadn't been practicing it much lately. I asked if he wanted to do the word lists given in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade testing booklet, but he didn't want to. I've explained that he can't get another box of "cool stuff" until all the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade tests are completed, but he indicated he wasn't comfortable yet "sending off" his cursive (he didn't think it was good enough).

I tried to encourage that he didn't have to be perfect, and he basically said that another reason was that the word lists were boring and he wanted to write his own story in cursive – not just a boring list of words. I accepted that, and he wrote a three sentence paragraph in cursive. I explained about indenting, reminded him to leave lots of space

after the period, and went over contractions for the word “I’m”. He questioned why the word “I” is always capitalized and the one letter word “a” isn’t (I have no idea). I made sure he spelled every word correctly, by having him tell me ahead of time how he was planning on spelling it. For the words he didn’t know how to spell, I wrote them off to the side and he copied them. Overall it went very well. He wrote: I like to play in the woods. There are trees and a stream where I play. I’m hoping to catch a crawdad next time. He wanted to end with “I love nature.” but his hand was getting tired and I suggested he be done. He read books in the evening as normal (and I read him a chapter of his choice, as normal).

#### Tuesday 6/26/07

No major reading/writing that I can think of (other than the couple hours at bedtime). Of course, it is really impossible not to read SOMETHING all day... the directions to board games, etc. all have to be read and we never read anything to him anymore. He did initiate a rhyming game again (where we give him a word and he comes up with a bunch of other words that rhyme with it) while I was making dinner. He typically either tells me a story (which he does A LOT), or plays a word game or something along that line while I wash dishes or cook. He always initiates, and often asks me to wash dishes as that’s his “talking time.”

I’m actually doing less school work with him than is normal; this survey caught us in the two week time period before my book deadline (July 1<sup>st</sup> – eep!)

#### Wednesday 6/27/07

When I went to the bank today, Charles took in a Bob Book and sat in the waiting room chair trying to get Diane to read it. He would give her the beginning sound of any words she was struggling with, and kept his finger under the words for her. It occupied them so much that by the time I was through the line they still didn’t want to leave. A passer-by commented on Charles reading, and he started chatting to the fellow about the books he likes to read. Sometimes he gets a weird reaction from people, over his level of reading, and I think it confuses him. He wanted to talk about it during the car ride home – he said he would be really sad if I had sent him away to public school and he didn’t know how to read (I did my best to defend public school and reminded him that his parents both attended it and we are literate!) Unfortunately, he sees public school as a place that parents send their kids if they are too poor (I had said “both parents need to work during the day and can’t stay home”) or are uneducated (I had said “sometimes parents don’t feel comfortable teaching”). I asked if he remembered being taught how to read, and he said he couldn’t remember a time when he didn’t read.

He also said he was working hard to teach Diane how to read so she wouldn’t be like some of his friends who couldn’t read anything (which frustrates him, as they can’t play his games very easily). He definitely sees a difference between his reading level and that of other children his age, but he attributes much of it to his being homeschooled. Any other reason I could think of to give him seemed inappropriate (he would end up interpreting “different ability levels” as “not smart”), so I left it alone. It was interesting to hear, though, that he places such a strong value on reading. He also said he wants to

be able to write long stories, and that is why he wants to be a better printer and practice his cursive – or maybe just learn to type as fast as Mommy!

#### Thursday 6/28/07

He spent the day at my mothers and completed more of the Calvert tests. She said he spent maybe 15-30 minutes on it. I had a phone call with the Cyberschool, explaining that we couldn't possibly do 6 hours of schoolwork a day (I didn't emphasize that I'm not sure if we do one hour). Since he's already read every book they sent him, and isn't having any trouble finishing the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade tests, I figure we're doing fine. When I asked if I really should read out loud the science book... when the boy has already read it himself and isn't having any trouble with the questions, they backed off. \*sigh\* I believe in the last couple weeks, due to my being so busy with my own work, he has almost completed a school years worth of reading tests, and about half the year in science. We never taught or prepped him for the reading tests, as there doesn't seem to be a point.

He also read pages of directions for a new computer game where he buys and sells chocolate bars for a profit. It isn't a kid game, but my mother was able to download it through Video Arcade and felt like it was appropriate for him. There is some sort of background plot to the game, and of course he has to read it. My mother initiated the activity to get him out of her hair!

#### Friday 6/29/07

I'm done my 2 week journal! I'm not sure what reading he did today, other than the normal bedtime routine. He was outside a lot.

It's been interesting doing this, especially during the last two weeks where I was feeling like a terrible homeschooling Mom who really wasn't making any effort to educate her children (but my book is almost done!) The reality is that he initiates a tremendous amount of educational experiences. He reads A LOT, has a growing interest in writing, and has taken over much of his own science/history/geography etc. education. I also realize now why your observation period went so badly (he was unusually surly and irritated for much of the time). I don't typically push things at the frenetic pace that I was doing when being "observed." There isn't a reason to. We do perform all of the learning activities that you witnessed, but mostly they originate from him – not me. While there are times that I do initiate an activity, such as filling in the Calvert tests, anything that he really doesn't want to do typically doesn't go on for more than 15 minutes. I'm personally rather paranoid of "pushing" him too hard (as non-homeschoolers assume that I must be a pushy, overly academic mom, in order to have my kids at their current educational levels), so I compensate by hardly ever initiating anything. I do however, RESPOND a lot to his desire for knowledge and skill in academic pursuits and I provide plenty of learning opportunities.

And Diane (who turned 3 on June 5<sup>th</sup>) can now read, by herself, sentences such as "A cat sat on Mom and a pig sat on Dad." I figure by 4 we will have her over the being taught how to read hump!



Addendum entered on July 25<sup>th</sup>: The testing came back from the Cyberschool. They listed Charles as having a 144 IQ, which puts him as highly gifted. I don't know if this fact will mess up your data, or cause problems with our participation in your research. I personally don't think he is any smarter than his Dad or I were at his age (and his sister is actually progressing quite a bit faster than he did at 2-3 years old.)

Anyway, he just finished the first Harry Potter book (which I gave him about 4 days ago). My main focus on his reading, at this point, is monitoring the content of what he reads – so that he doesn't read things that are inappropriate for his age. I told him he could read book 2 of Harry Potter, and then would have to be done for at least a year or so.